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OFF AND ON.

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A Story of Frontenac's Time.

Beadle's Dime Novels, No. 56

TO ISSUE SATURDAY, JUNE 20th,

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OR,

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N. ORR. CO

OFF AND ON;

OR,

THE "RANGER'S" FIRST CRUISE.

BY JOHN S. WARNER,

AUTHOR OF "WRECK OF THE ALBION," "THE BLACK SHIP," ETC.

BEADLE AND COMPANY,

NEW YORK: 118 WILLIAM STREET.

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OFF AND ON.

CHAPTER I.

A VISITOR AND THE UNKNOWN.

WE invite the reader's attention to the city of Paris, in the winter of 1777. It was a wild, stormy day. The rain, freezing as it fell, incased the tall old trees of the Champs Elysées and the gardens of the Tuilleries in an icy embrace. The river Seine, beneath its lofty bridges and by its old quays, flowed sluggishly, mirroring with still deeper gloom the leaden clouds that hung above the spires of Notre Dame and St. Genevieve.

Pacing, with nervous strides, the room belonging to a public house situated in a remote part of the city near the suburbs of St. Antoine, was a man not more than two and thirty years of age. He was dressed in the loose-fitting yet becoming costume of the devotees of Neptune. Upon a table lay several charts, with numerous drawings of naval architecture, showing him to be by no means a novice in the profession of constructor. To the careless observer, he would pass as an ordinary man, yet there was that in his walk, in his bearing, and in the expression of his face, which indicated not only the resolute will but the man born to command.

"Every hope blighted, and my fondest dreams never to be realized!" he exclaimed, allowing his discontent to find utterance. "Willing to sacrifice my all; to yield my best endeavors in freeing America from the yoke that oppresses her, still I am denied every request! How is this? Am I at fault, or is it owing to the greater influence others possess that enable them to receive whatever they see fit to ask? This moping, creeping indolence!" he continued, striking his clenched fist violently upon the table, "which thwarts my aims and checks my very steps, when the conception of the plan of action is so clearly defined! Are the several

enterprises that I have so long contemplated of no importance? Am I wrong, when I say, that to strike an enemy at a point where he thinks improbable, not only paralyzes his strength, but the surprise insures its success?"

He paused, and going to a low window, gazed out upon the deserted and icy street. The figure of a man, enveloped in a heavy cloak, his cap pulled far down upon his brow so as to conceal his features, was making his way slowly toward the house in which the stranger was. "In yonder man," he continued, after watching him until a corner hid him from sight, "I learn a lesson. What his aims are in being abroad this wintry day I know not; yet he doubtless has an object, and, regardless alike of rain and ice, is resolutely carrying it out." Leaning against the casement, he indulged in reverie until aroused by a knock. Without changing his position, he bade the person enter. The door opened, and the form of a pretty *femme de chambre* appeared.

"A stranger wishes to see monsieur," she said, in French.

"Tell him to come up," he replied, but quickly added: "Stay! what kind of a person is he, and how dressed?"

"I can not tell, monsieur. I did not see his face. He is tall, and muffled in a large cloak."

"Has he called on me before?"

"Not since you have been here, monsieur."

"And he sent no name?"

"None, monsieur."

"Send him up," he said, waving his hand as a dismissal.

As soon as the girl had retired, he opened the drawer of the table, and taking a pistol from it, carefully examined the priming-pan; then placing it in his bosom, he waited the appearance of his visitor. Heavy footsteps were soon heard, and the stranger was ushered into the apartment. He was a young man of some seven and twenty years of age, of a slight yet muscular build. His face wore a look of mental suffering, yet the eye, that index of our secret selves, shone with a keen luster, indicating the resolute spirit. His dress presented a singular mixture of the landsman and sailor. The removal of the heavy cloak he wore revealed tight-fitting English pants tucked into coarse top-boots; the remainder of his apparel consisted of a thick blue naval shirt, with its broad

collar turned well down, and a common pea-jacket. Bowing with a grace that bespoke him to be other than his dress indicated, he said :

"I was informed that I would find the Captain of an American vessel of war here ; am I addressing that person ?"

The stern eye of the Captain was fixed searchingly upon him for some time ere he replied :

"Supposing you are, sir, what business have you with him ?"

"I have an offer to make."

"Speak it out, then."

"Excuse me, sir, but I must first be assured that you are the man I seek."

"And I in return must also know to whom I speak," was the Captain's rejoinder.

"There are times," rejoined the visitor, "when it does behoove a man to watch closely every word he utters, and to whom ; but, as I have nothing to fear, unless unjustly dealt by, I take pleasure in informing you that I am an American."

"You are candid ; but you will pardon me if I ask you to *prove* this. I am a man who knows not at what moment he may meet an enemy, and therefore am, and shall be, guarded."

"I can readily understand, and can not blame you for the caution. These papers will convince you, I trust, that I am no impostor."

Having carefully perused them, the Captain returned them to the young man, and extending his hand at the same time, replied : "I am glad to see you, Mr. Fletcher. As I am, without doubt, the person whom you seek, tell me the object of your visit."

"When do you put to sea ?"

"I can not say, as my movements are under the control of others."

"Have you a berth for me, sir ?"

"I am to understand then that you wish to offer your services in behalf of America ?"

"I most certainly do."

"And God knows how much she needs the aid of every arm capable of striking a blow in the cause of liberty and right. But, surely, Mr. Fletcher, you do not think of shipping before the mast, even to gratify your laudable resolve ?"

"But I do, sir," replied the young man, with decision. "For, why should I expect a more exalted position than my fellows, merely because fate has granted me a few more advantages? Are they not also fellow-men, and what more am I than a simple American citizen?"

"I admire your enthusiasm; still, do you not think it possible that you could be of more service did you hold the position of leader rather than subordinate?"

"I will confess to you, sir, that were such an offer to present itself, I should not be ill pleased. But that can not be, I fear. My only hope lays in you. Your officers are, no doubt, all appointed ere this."

"Tell me why it is you are so anxious to sail from this country, however? Should you journey to the Colonies and there offer your sword, there is no doubt but that your ambition would be gratified and some small vessel placed under your command."

The young man made no reply, but an extra shade of sadness flitted across his features. The observant Captain felt there must be something weighing heavily upon the spirits of his newly-made friend, and the desire to retain him, and befriend him if possible, instantly took possession of his breast. It was one of his distinguishing and noblest traits of character.

"You are silent," he resumed, "and I infer that you prefer going with me in a subordinate position. Is it so?"

"I should, sir, much prefer it, if I can; and if strict obedience and the performance of every duty would compensate you for the favor of a berth before the mast, you shall have them all."

"I believe you. I have been thrown among all sorts of men in my day, Mr. Fletcher. I flatter myself that I can read character pretty well, and know who I may trust. Have you been much at sea?"

"For many years, sir; and I may add, am by no means a novice in the handling of a ship."

"Had I entire control of my own actions," continued the Captain, after a little thought, "I could assign you a position under my command worthy of you; but, as matters now stand, I can only promise that my best endeavors shall be used

in your behalf. I tell you, sir, that had I the means at hand to carry out my designs, I would make old England rock to her very base, and leave a name that history's page would paint in glowing colors!" His animation increased as he continued: "Look from yonder window out upon the storm, and tell me if man does not at times have the same deep gloom overshadowing his moments? 'Tis so with me often; 'tis so to-day; but is not the sun shining *beyond* those somber clouds, and will not its glory burst those bonds? Ay, ay, sir!" he exclaimed, with a proud decision. "So it shall be with me. My life has been as checkered as a chessman's board; driven hither and thither upon life's ocean, at times bereft of chart and compass; and yet I have been saved from shipwreck. I have run great risks, and shall continue to do so, for where has any gallant action been performed without danger. Though I can not positively command success, I shall endeavor to deserve it! Mr Fletcher, did the Colonies but grant me a fleet of five sail—yes, if but one single ship, chosen, rigged and manned as I should select, I would perform deeds that no other man ever thought of! But I'll strike one blow if my life is spared, that will leave an echo ringing as long as this earth remains, if I do it with nothing better than a yawl boat."

His excitement had gradually increased, until, as he ceased speaking, he seized a short but heavy cut-and-thrust sword, used on board war-vessels for hand-to-hand encounters, and half drew it from its scabbard; then, recollecting himself, he sheathed the weapon, and passing his hand across his brow, asked as calmly as if his feelings had never been ruffled:

"How came you to Paris, Mr. Fletcher?"

"There is quite a story attached to it, which would be interesting to none save myself. I need not therefore narrate it," replied the young man, after he had in a measure recovered from the astonishment into which the abrupt change in the manner of his interlocutor had thrown him. "I was taken prisoner by the crew of a ship's cutter, and carried to England, where an examination was held, but, as no charges could be found against me, I was released and came to Brest. From thence I came here to seek you."

"How came you to hear of me?"

"It was by mere accident, having overheard a conversation between two seamen."

"Did you learn my name?"

"I did not; and even forgot to inquire below. May I now make the request?"

"Let time inform you," replied the Captain, in his low-toned voice. "I would keep it a secret from my dearest friend if it were in my power, though no act of mine has stamped it with dishonor. Follow my fortunes, Fletcher, for a time, and you will hear it spoken in the report of my guns, and see it printed upon the battered hulls of the proud ships of Britain."

"How long, think you, sir, shall I have to wait before I can be assured of a berth on your vessel?"

"I can not say; but as you will be useful, you shall remain with me until I am informed of my own movements. I wish I could fall in with more men of your stamp."

"I have made the acquaintance of but one American, but he is a queer piece of eccentricity; I do not know what to say for him. He is determined to link his fortunes with mine whether or no, and—"

"An American you said?"

"An American, and genuine in all respects."

"Where is he?"

"I left him at a *café* but a short distance from this; and, now that I am reminded, I feel anxious to get back. He is as reckless as he is queer, and so dislikes a Frenchman that any moment may bring him into trouble."

"A little excitement would do me good. I will go with you. Are you armed?"

"With a brace of pistols."

"Then let us go forth in search of our countryman. I desire to meet with *fearless* men just at this time."

The two passed out into the street.

CHAPTER II.

HEZEKIAH'S DINNER.

JOURNEYING from Brest to Paris, Fletcher had met with as pure a specimen of Yankeeism as could well have been found. At first he felt no great desire for the fellow's companionship; but he found, upon a better acquaintance, that, uncouth as were his actions and language, he would make a substantial friend. The simple fact of his being a countryman, in a land where few were to be found, drew the bond of fellowship between them still closer; and, as the man was desirous of going to sea, he determined to keep his company, and in future to mutually share the good or evil that might befall them.

Hezekiah Hand had sailed from the city of Boston, whither he had strayed from his native place, near Bangor, in the State of Maine, and had been absent for some three years on a trading voyage. While returning, the vessel had been stranded and abandoned upon the coast of France. His dialect was purely "Yankee." He was shrewd, fearless, reckless. Among his *accomplishments* was a rather extraordinary faculty of mimicry.

When Fletcher started in search of the American Captain, he had requested Hand's company, but it was declined on the plea that he was "oncommon hungry." Unwilling to leave Hezekiah alone, the young man hesitated about pressing his search; but, persuaded that his absence would be brief, Fletcher departed, leaving Hand at the door of a public house, promising to return as speedily as possible.

For some time High, for so he called himself, remained standings regardless of the flood of rain that poured upon him, industriously striving to decipher a sign placed above the door of the house opposite.

"Dang it!" he at length exclaimed, "I can't make it out. if I stand here till I get the shakes. Rather bad weather this for a live man to be out, so I'll jest step over and see what they've got to sell. Let's take another look though, 'kase it

won't do to be over green about things in *these* parts. *C-a-f-é*," he continued, slowly spelling the word; "that sounds like calf, whatever the rest's meant for, and seeing that kind of meat ain't bad eating, though it's *oncommon* queer they don't keep more of a variety, I'll have some for dinner."

Stepping up to the door, he opened it, and standing upon the threshold, gazed within, uttering, in a stentorian voice, the greeting:

"Good mornin'."

The salute attracted the attention of several persons, who simply turned their heads a moment, and then continued the conversation which he had for the moment interrupted.

"Guess you didn't hear," continued High, without stirring; "or, if you did, you ain't common civil. But here's at you again—how are you all?"

The cold blast that entered from without provoked an answer, rather than the disinterested kindness of the adventurer in inquiring after their health.

"*Je vous souhaite le bonjour*," returned one of the company seated nearest him, nodding his head. Then turning to a waiter, he ordered: "*Donnez une chaise à monsieur*."

The waiter hastened to do as bidden. Planting the chair, he motioned High to be seated, and said, bowing politely:

"*Asseyez-vous je vous prie, monsieur*."

"Guess I will, though I'll be stumped if I know what you're jabbering about. Ain't ye got no one in this house as speaks a little plain English? Seeing as how I've dropped in to have some dinner, and as you and I can't make out, it's a pretty sure thing that I'll have to wag my jaws empty, though it ain't nothing but a calf that you've got in the way of meats, and *that's* easy asked for."

"*Oui, monsieur*," replied the obsequious waiter, seeming to make out by the visitor's motions what he desired, rather than from his speech.

"Wal, if these ain't green chaps! I asked him to bring one that could talk with me, and he says he'll fetch *we*—that means two on 'em. But here he comes, and now let's see what I can do with him. Oncommon glad to see you, that is if you can talk a Christian language," he said, as the person reached him.

"I speak von little Eengleesh, monsieur," replied the man.

"Then you're jest the chap, so here's at you. S'pose you bring along some of that calf you've got rit on your sign."

"Eh? Vat does monsieur vant?" asked the puzzled Frenchman.

"Some *calf*!" replied High, raising his voice.

"Monsieur make fun."

"Fun! No, sir. That ain't fun. Fun don't fill a man's stomach, does it? Don't you know what sort of a critter a *calf* is?"

"No, *sar*!"

"Wal, you're a bright un, sartin," replied Hezekiah, in astonishment. "S'pose you've got such a thing as beef in this country—eh?"

"Oui, monsieur, dare is plenty beef in France. You have roas' beef?"

"How in nater do you raise beef if you don't start with a calf? See here, mister, you ain't going to make me believe *you* don't know eggs from young chickens, or a calf from a cow; and if you think that I'm green 'kase I happened to come from t'other side of the water, you'll find you're mistaken afore you get much further. But I won't be hard with you on the start; and seeing as how I'm over and above hungry, I'd be all the better pleased if you'd jest produce a little of that calf—a nice cutlet of veal."

The man, at the mention of the last-named article, at once comprehended, and with a low bow hastened to execute the order.

"That looks nice," said High, with a grin of satisfaction, as the smoking dish was set before him. "Guess you keep things over the fire here, but it ain't good to cook meat too much. If you ain't in much of a hurry, s'pose you set down, and we'll have a chat while I'm making way with these vittles. No? Wal, if you're so uncommon polite as to stand I won't object. What on 'arth have you got in this dish?" he suddenly exclaimed, as, after sundry blows to cool the mouthful, he let it disappear.

"There be notting, monsieur, but veal—nice veal."

"Nothing! It seems to me as if you'd spilt all the pepper and spice you've got in the house into it, and then felt sorry

you didn't have any more. It's hot enough to cook itself," he continued, puffing out his cheeks, for the highly-flavored meat was unpalatable to his taste. "It's lucky I'm about half starved, or I'd let you have the dish back."

"If you vish, I shall change it, sar."

"Guess I won't let you, 'kase I reckon I'd be jumping out of the fryingpan into the fire. You'd better take a run over to the Colonies, and l'arn how to cook vittles without the taste burnin' out a man's innards."

And with this remark High set about his task, making sundry wry faces, in the mean time, over his unpalatable dish.

Having finished, he called, with a sense of importance, for some wine, and tilting back his chair, with his feet elevated upon the back of another, he waited the arrival of Fletcher. He had occupied himself for some time in noticing what was passing around, when his attention was attracted to three men, who, entering, seated themselves near. After having given their orders, one of them remarked in English to his companions that there was a chance of hearing good news from the Colonies, and forthwith gave it as his opinion that America would soon return to her loyalty to Great Britain. Hezekiah patiently listened to every word. Although their views were not to his taste, yet for reasons best known to himself he remained silent.

"You have heard from Amsterdam?" remarked one of the trio.

"I can not say that I have."

"What! not about the disappointment the Commissioners from the Colonies have received through the energy of our Government?"

"No. What is it?"

"It seems that they have been building a vessel in that port which the Commissioners intended to purchase and employ in their piratical service. She was a frigate, and would, no doubt, have caused much havoc among our merchantmen before she could have been captured or destroyed, provided they could have supplied her with a good commander. Our minister, it appears, has, for a long time, been suspicious of something of this kind, and at last, through the vigilance of

spies, discovered their intention, and compelled the Commissioners to transfer her to the French Government. It has been a severe blow, and will tend materially to end the rebellion."

"I am truly glad to hear it. But who was to command her? Do you know?"

"That I do not."

"Some renegade from our service, I suppose, who would degrade himself still more by turning pirate. I do really think there is no class of persons more to be pitied and despised than a traitor."

"Hanging is a punishment they richly merit," was the reply.

"That's your 'pinion, is it?" exclaimed High, no longer able to restrain his wrath, at the same time removing his limbs from their exalted position, and resting his elbows on the table, looked steadily at the three.

This salutation was so unexpected, that surprise held them silent for some moments. They at length broke into a hearty fit of laughter, provoked, no doubt, by the grotesque look which rested upon the countenance of the Yankee.

"That certainly is our opinion," replied one of the number, at length, checking his merriment, and assuming a look of sternness. "But who are you that thinks different?"

"About as good a man as the hull three of you put together, and a better one than *any* chap that first saw light on that nasty little greasy island of England."

"You certainly hold a very good opinion of yourself, and a poor one of your superiors," said one of the party, with much contempt expressed in his tone and manner.

"Yeou don't say!" replied High, in a ludicrously tantalizing tone. "You see, stranger, I've been about *some*, and I reckon if a man knows by sperience what the world is, I'm that person. Your blessed island of *Hingland* reminds me of a griddle-cake taken off the fire and set out over night in the cold to keep from turning sour; and Hinglishmen remind me of fellers who gits up arter ten o'clock and eats the sour cakes for his breakfast."

"Where do you hail from, my friend?" demanded one of the Britons.

"From hum," was the brief reply.

"Very likely you did; but where's that?"

"All the way from the State of Maine."

"As I supposed," said the stranger, addressing his companions. "This is a specimen of the men we are contending with. Who can doubt as to the ultimate success of our brave troops?"

"Perhaps, stranger," replied High, rising from his seat and approaching the group, "that you don't think the specimen, as you call me, ain't got no muscle, and ain't no count at fighting your *brave troops*? Now, s'pose you jest give us your hand, and let's take a squeeze on the subject."

The person addressed was the smaller of the three. As he glanced at the tall, bony figure before him, he certainly felt no anxiety to accept the challenge. One of his companions, however, was not to be thus baffled, and feeling that to allow the Yankee thus to banter them without a show of resistance would detract from his honor as an Englishman, he replied:

"I'll make this agreement with you, although in doing so I am not sure but I lower myself. I will grip with you, and whoever causes the most pain shall be considered the better man."

"Agreed!" exclaimed High, as he cut a "pigeon wing" in his demonstration of satisfaction. "Let's get a hold of your paw."

All the arrangements, however, were not perfected. It was to be decided by the turn of a coin who should have the first trial. As fate would have it, High lost.

"S'pose you change hands?" he suggested.

"By no means. You are both to use your right in giving and receiving the pressure."

"Dingnation, if that's fair," replied the Yankee; "but if that was the bargain I'll not back out if you make hash of it."

He then divested himself of his coat, regardless of the frowns bestowed upon him by the Frenchmen, whose attention had been somewhat attracted by his loud tone of voice, and tucking up well the sleeve of his coarse woolen shirt, exhibited his muscular arm. His antagonist made none of these preparations, yet the large bony hand, and stout wrist, plainly showed

an unusual amount of strength, convincing the American that victory—should it decide in his favor—would not be easily bought.

“Now, Mr. what’s-your-name, jest get hold and do your best, and I’ll be chawed ef I flinch even to save that island of yours from being swallowed up by a cow whale.”

He extended his hand, which was instantly grasped, while the eye of each was riveted upon the other as the grasp tightened. To say that High bore it without pain, would not be doing his antagonist justice. It was exquisite torture that he bore as the hand closed like a vice. Yet, not a muscle of his weather-beaten face betrayed his agony, although for one moment it was suffused by a ruddy flush, plainly showing how earnest was the struggle to hide the pain.

“Thunder!” was his ejaculation, after the trial had ended, at the same time holding up his hand, which looked very much as if it had been subjected to some powerful press; “but you’re about as good at that fun as any one that ever I met. I kalkelate you’ve been practicing afore, and have got about as near perfect as you well can. How on ’arth do you expect I’m going to do any thing with this paw ef you don’t give me a little time to rest?”

“You are entitled to a few moments,” replied his antagonist; “but if you are as able to return the squeeze as you are to endure it, my chance is not very good, after all.”

“Wal, as to that I can’t say; but ef you’d see’d what I’ve done in that line afore, your eyes ’ud begin to water just thinking of it.”

Hezekiah now engaged himself in rubbing his half-paralyzed member back to life again. Opening and shutting it several times he at last notified his readiness, and the second trial commenced. His determination to come off victorious made him forget every thing, and seemed to restore his hand its usual strength; but in spite of all his efforts, the Englishman bore it without flinching, and the contest remained undecided. The pain each had endured, had, however, the effect of arousing the anger of both. Soon hot words passed between them. High, who, from boyhood, had never manifested an aversion for being foremost in a “scrimmage,” seemed nothing loth on this occasion to commence one, and, regardless of the

numbers opposed to him, employed all the sarcastic language he was master of to provoke his enemy to a blow. This soon had the desired effect. Blows were about to ensue, when the Captain and Fletcher entered the room. Seeing at once the state of affairs, they threw themselves between the combatants.

"Fall back!" shouted the young man, addressing Hand, in the stern, authoritative tone used on shipboard; "can I not leave you even for so short a time but you must make a quarrel with the first man you meet? And you, sir, should know better, if I judge rightly by your appearance, and should have more prudence than my follower."

"It is a matter that concerns you but little, if at all; and, had you inculcated these superior lessons which one may suppose you possess, in the breast of your 'follower,' as you term him, it might have saved him the chastisement his insolence would have received; but which, luckily for him, your presence has saved," replied the Englishman.

"I will have no words with you," calmly replied Fletcher, although he felt his anger aroused at the words addressed him, "but would recommend you not to forget the principles of a gentleman, which you, no doubt, claim to possess."

"Indeed! Perhaps you can teach me what is and is not proper," was the caustic reply, for the anger that the Yankee had aroused still burned fiercely in the Briton's veins.

"I have no desire to that honor, although I might readily play the instructor did I not know that my best endeavors would be but thrown away," answered Fletcher, with much *hauteur* in his tone and manner.

"You are without doubt a countryman of yonder fellow?"

"Suppose I am, what then?"

"Nothing, save that we overlook many of your actions on the grounds of ignorance."

"You, who have been taught to obey, and play the minion of—"

"Peace, Fletcher," exclaimed a low, stern voice by his side. "Have done with this foolish bantering, for 'tis but wasting words that can be used to better purpose."

"And pray, who are you that hold so much authority?" asked the Englishman, facing the Captain.

"Your master!" was the reply, as a quick fire shot across the unknown's face.

"If you will prove it, then I shall acknowledge you as such. My name is—"

"Again I say, your *master*," calmly interrupted the Captain, fixing his eagle eye upon the man. "But the proof shall not be given you as you desire. You wish, I suppose, a combat of man to man; *that* you shall not have. Come where I battle. Come where the strife is fiercest, where the dead and dying lay in their gore; come where your hopes are trampled upon, and disappointment stares upon you at every turn. Come, I say, with me through all these, and you will acknowledge that he is my master only who can govern himself!" His words were like a power. All were abashed. "Come," he continued, turning to Fletcher and Hand, "we have work before us, and every moment carries its task." He turned and left the place, followed by Fletcher. Arriving at the door the young man paused. Hezekiah could not leave without saying one word more to his late antagonist.

"Look here, you sneaks!" he called out, "I'd sooner square yards with you than eat another plate of this 'ere hotel man's calf, but I'm under orders and ain't got time. Reckon you'll hear 'bout some jobs that will be done afore long, and set it down as a sartainty that Hezekiah Hand, of Maine, 's been mixed up in them. Like to have one more grip with you, Mr. Plum-pudding-face, kase my hand's all right now; but I'm up for a cruise, so good-day to you, and if ever you come over to America, just call on me and I'll show you some of the places where your brave troops got into trouble and eat Yankee provender between bars!" So saying, he passed into the street.

"You are really very imprudent," said the young man, as they hurried to overtake their leader. "If you wish to remain with me you must check your temper."

"Couldn't help it," replied Hand, meekly; "tried to for some time but it *had* to bust out. Don't know, Mr. Fletcher, how 'twould have been if I hadn't eat that plate of calf, for you see they'd got so much pepper and spice of one kind or nuther in it that 'twas so hot it helped to rise my blood."

"Well, well, Hand, let the matter drop, but be careful in future."

"That's the man, is it?" remarked the Yankee, a moment after, pointing to the Captain.

"Yes."

"Square-built and honest-looking," he said, criticisingly. "Hope you've made all right?"

"I am not sure as to that, but hope so."

"And how 'bout me?"

"Your chance is equal with mine."

"Wal, that's all right," was the satisfied rejoinder, and a moment later they reached the Captain's abode.

Seating themselves, they at once entered into the subject of the service—their conversation being carried on in so low a tone that Hezekiah, who kept his ears well open, could not catch a word. At last, giving up the attempt, he sat toying with his cap until he was aroused by the Captain's voice.

"I am informed by Mr. Fletcher that you wish to try the sea in a vessel of war?"

"Wouldn't mind doing it, sir, if the chance hove in sight," replied the adventurer, adopting the sailor's vernacular, feeling that he addressed his future commander.

"You have been at sea before?"

"Reckon I have, sir, *some*. Think I know the difference 'tween a cat's-paw and a bowline on the bight."

"You would, no doubt, like some petty office?"

"Don't care so much 'bout that, although it's kinder nat'ral for a man to do as well as he can. You can send me below, sir, in the orlop deck, to coil cable or watch stores; it don't make much odds, so long as you let me on deck when there's chance for a brush."

"You have found a willing man, Mr. Fletcher, and one who, I doubt not, will render good service." Then addressing Hand, he continued: "how would you be pleased with the charge of a gun?"

"Gosh! you jest give me one to squint over, and if I don't play blacksmith with iron balls, I'll let you ram me home for a charge. I ain't bad with a rifle, as those to hum know; and I reckon I can do something with a bigger gun. All you'll have to do is to say the word, and I'll pick off any party of topmen or mariners you likê, and for that matter finish the quartermaster at the relieving-tackles."

"Be not over boastful," said the Captain, smiling at the man's enthusiasm, "for, some day I may remember what you have said, and ask you to give me a *proof* of your valor."

The conversation at this point was turned to subjects of more importance, until night had succeeded day, and each one sought for rest. Upon entering his solitary room, Fletcher drew from his bosom a miniature likeness, and gazed with a painful look upon it. The contracted brow, the trembling of the lip, and the fluttering breath held back by a firm resolve from being born into a sigh, plainly demonstrated the presence of heart-anguish. It was the picture of a fair young girl. The finely-developed head betokened intelligence; the well-formed nose and compressed lip told of resolution; while the deep-blue eye seemed to gaze with a fond, loving look into his. But why is the young sailor thus affected? Why is his brow contracted, and the bosom racked into so wild a tumult? Who was she that even her shadow should so move a brave soul?

CHAPTER III.

ALL HANDS AHOY!

It was early spring-time. Nature seemed anxious to divest itself of the winding-sheet that winter had thrown about her, and appear in the bridal garb of vernal green.

In a small snug harbor, well concealed from the prying eye of the numerous English cruisers that floated upon the waters which washed the French coast, lay a small but well-built ship, at whose gaff fluttered in the still air the flag of the United Colonies. It was evident, at a glance, that she either had been built or altered under the direction of a skillful eye. Her armament consisted of no more than eighteen six-pounders. With these few guns she intended making her pathless way over waters where, at almost any moment, she might encounter the enormous seventy-fours of Britain. Little cared her noble commander or the brave hearts that clustered about him for the threatened danger; but with the

determination to combat to the death, they were about spreading their sails to the wind, and let it waft them to where danger most lay.

Seated in the room of a small inn sat the stranger Captain, Fletcher and Hand—the latter dressed in the most becoming mixture of homespun and man-of-war's-man rig.

"Well, Mr. Fletcher, I have my orders at last," remarked his commander, "and now we have nothing to wait for. I say nothing, but Heaven knows I stand in need of many things; yet the longer I tarry the more remote seems my chance of getting them. So let's up anchor and away."

"I am right glad to hear the order. Inactivity ill suits my tastes," replied Fletcher.

"So it seems. Pardon me, but there seems a mystery hanging about you—a something that influences your actions, and makes you restless. Am I right?"

The young man remained silent, and the Captain continued:

"Come, 'tis not right to confine sorrows from a sympathizing friend. Tell me what it is that casts such a gloom about you. Nay, do not say 'tis nothing, for I can fathom the human heart too deeply not to see that you *have* a secret locked within your breast."

"Excuse me, Captain, if I refuse to speak of it, for 'tis but a trifle at best. Some other time I may tell you, but not now. Shall we go on board, sir?"

"Be it so," replied the Captain, apparently not noticing the young man's question; "but do not forget that in me you see a man you can trust."

"I am convinced of that, sir. Shall we start?"

"Not until night, for we are watched, and require darkness to conceal our movements."

"How said you, Hand? Are the cruisers still about?"

"Sartain, sir; they're standing off and on, watching for us to put our noses sea'ard."

"Let them," muttered his superior, in a low, deep voice; "for it shall be off and on with us ere many days, and, if I mistake not, to their cost. Fletcher, 'tis a good appellation to give our movements, so let us adopt it, and may the sequel show how well we carry it out."

There was so much of earnestness conveyed in these words,

that even Hand's eyes were quickly raised to gaze upon his superior's face. It was as calm as ever, save that the brow was a trifle more closely knit, and the lip more tightly compressed, telling of the resolute will that dwelt within his breast. He was a strange man. Full of impulse, he was generous to a fault. His nature was as stormy as the element on which he lived, and as deep as its unfathomed waves.

As night came slowly on, the sky, which, through the day, had been clear, was now overspread by broken clouds. The dull roar of the ocean, as its waves dashed themselves in whiteness against the base of some huge cliff, smote upon the ear. The wind, which had changed, and was now blowing directly "on shore," whistled shrilly around the corners. The surging of the naked tree-tops, or the occasional shrill scream of some gull, filled the breast of the listener with a wild emotion, which harmonized well with the commotions manifested by nature. Far out, amid the increasing gloom then gathering like ghostly shadows upon the northern seaboard, could be seen the white canvas of those huge war-vessels, the voice of whose cannons seemed to thunder forth to the world that proud decree, "Britannia rules the waves." They had, for a long time, kept zealous watch for the appearance of any vessel that might leave the friendly shores of France to aid in the struggle taking place in the western world. For some time the *Ranger*—for such was the name of the vessel with which we have to do—had been ready for active service, yet unavoidable delays had prevented her sailing until the present moment, which nature seemed willing to aid in making the propitious one.

"Order our supper prepared at once," said the Captain, addressing Hand, arousing himself from the dreamy state he had fallen into, and with that abrupt and sudden manner so peculiar to him. "It will be sufficiently dark after we have finished it to hide our movements."

"Have you a pilot?" asked Fletcher.

"No," was the short answer.

"Then we shall find it hard to get to sea."

"Why?"

"Because, sir, I am told that the channel is narrow, and we also lay with a shoal on each beam."

"I shall act as pilot, Mr. Fletcher. Happening to know the harbor, I feel no concern but that we can find a sufficient depth of water to float out."

The young man bowed, and Hand soon returning with the intelligence that their meal was ready, they hastened to partake of it, and then to steal unobserved down to the quay.

The little boat, urged through the water by the strong arms that plied the oars, soon reached the ship. The sturdy crew welcomed their commander with prolonged cheers.

"My brave lads," he said, his eye brightening at the manifestations of affection, "we are again to engage in the excitement attending our calling. Some of you have been with me before, and know that I am a man who never shuns danger if there is an advantage to be gained. This voyage shall eclipse all others that I have made; consequently, the perils we shall encounter will be increased. I shall strike the enemy wherever I can find him, and where he least expects it. I shall enter his crowded seaports. I shall pounce, like a bird of prey, upon his defenseless coasts. I shall follow, with remorseless haste, his merchantmen, or cut out from under the guns of his largest frigate any transport which the mast-head descries. But remember, that all this is to be accomplished through *you*—that the name we may achieve, and which shall be handed down to posterity, will be in common with us all. All share alike in glory and in death; all work as with one arm, one mind, one determination, in the noble cause we have espoused. Let me plan—do you execute. I command—you yield an unquestioning obedience; all will go well. You fight for your families, your homes, your God and your native land. Never—mark well what I say—let that infant flag which flutters above us be disgraced; and though your arm is raised against a mighty power, let the new-born aspirations of freemen nerve you, and fill your breast with the firm resolve to do, to suffer, or to die, if need be, for the cause of independence and nationality. Now, my lads, to your stations, and let to-morrow's sun show us the *Ranger* far out at sea."

The circle of weather-beaten and scarred faces lit up with the enthusiasm of men glad to hear of danger and honorable strife. Their commander stood apart, his arms folded upon

his breast, and his bright eye fixed upon the flag that fluttered at the gaff. For a moment there reigned a most impressive silence, which was at length broken by Hezekiah, who could no longer contain his feelings. Springing upon a gun-carriage, with a whoop that would have done justice to some Indian brave, he swung aloft his cap, and shouted:

"That's the way to talk, and consarn the man that wouldn't fight catamounts for the flag of liberty. Jest open your mouths before you open your sails, and let's give a shout that'll raise them gulls a foot or two higher in the air."

Scarcely had he finished, when there burst from the crew a cheer that swelled high above the whistling winds, and floated far out to leeward. It had not died away, when the rumbling report of a cannon came across the water.

"To your stations," was the quick command, as the Captain started at the sound. His words were followed by a further outburst from the crew. "Hear you that gun, Mr. Fletcher? It is a reproof at my tardiness, and perhaps 'tis well sent." He paused a moment, and then continued, in a gloomy tone: "'Tis thus that every step of my life is dogged. I have never indulged in any emotion of pride, gratification, or the tender sentiment, but some sudden circumstance brings me back to duty—stern, unflinching duty. Ay, grumble away, old dotard," he added, as a second report met his ear; "you may, perhaps, be answered some day, gun for gun, when the answer will be in the tearing of wood, or in the cries of dead and dying men. But I waste time. Take command of the ship, sir, while I act as your pilot."

The men were soon at their stations, and the work of preparation commenced in the way of seeing that the hawse was clear, overhauling the cable, getting up nippers, passing the messenger, knocking up the stanchions, shipping the gratings and capstan bars, rigging the fish-davit and overhauling cat and fish, and eventually ending with the order:

"All hands unmoor ship!"

The anxiety Fletcher had manifested in regard to the procuring of a pilot, arose from the fact that in proceeding to sea they would have to encounter a shoal on each beam, and one astern, which it was impossible to weather. There was, however, just room to pass between the one astern and those

abeam, the wind favoring the movement, yet it required nice seamanship and a thorough knowledge of the harbor. The unhesitating manner in which the young man had been answered by his superior, who had undertaken the task of pilot, set his mind somewhat at rest; yet he felt no little concern for the successful accomplishment of getting the ship out of the harbor.

"Are you ready forward, Mr. Fletcher?"

"All ready, sir."

"See that the men are prompt in obeying orders."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Pass the stream cable out of one of the quarter ports, Mr. Fletcher, and bend on one end to the cable, and make fast the other to the topsail sheet-bits. Draw in the splice of your cable, sir. Draw it in, and bend on a ship-buoy."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Are you ready?"

"All ready, sir."

"Heave it overboard."

The dull splash and customary answer told that the order was executed.

"Are your stoppers clear for slipping?" asked the Captain.

"All clear, sir."

"Stop the topsails to the yards, and off with gaskets."

"Ready, sir," was the reply, as the command was obeyed.

"Loose courses, jib and spanker," was quickly ordered; and, in an instant after: "Masthead the topsail yards—man the jib-halliards;" then, addressing the helmsman, he continued—his previous order having been executed: "Give your helm a sheer—sheer her *from* the cable."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the man, doing as bidden.

"Up jib, Mr. Fletcher. Slip and run up the jib, sir, and keep fast the stream cable. How now, does she swing round?"

"I think she does—yes, sir, she does."

The vessel continued slowly to turn, until she headed for the passage, when the cable was slipped, the helm righted, and, under the influence of sufficient sail, she passed safely into the open sea.

The bustle attending their departure subsided, and the crew, excepting those on watch, retired below. A stillness followed,

broken only by the sound of the whistling wind, that blew in fitful, angry puffs, or the rippling of the water, as it bubbled under the vessel's prow. Fletcher had retired aft, and stood leaning against a gun, with his eye fixed vacantly on the wilderness of water that surrounded him. An hour had passed, when his reverie was disturbed by a message from the Captain, who desired to see him. He accordingly descended to the cabin.

"All right above, Mr. Fletcher?" was the first inquiry, as his superior motioned him to a seat, and pushed back a pile of papers from before him.

"Yes, sir."

"No signs of an enemy's light?"

"None, sir."

"I doubt if we fall in with any; at least, such is not my wish; but, should we, then it remains to be seen what kind of heels our little craft carries."

"Have they knowledge of our having been in a French port?"

"Not particularly *us*; but they are aware that the Commissioners are endeavoring to fit out vessels from France. Consequently, they would be apt to suspicion any sail standing as we do, and wearing as mischievous a look as does the *Ranger*."

"Would that our country had but a few more such crafts, and under the guidance of as good a commander."

"Stop, Mr. Fletcher," quickly replied his superior. "Flattery I *abhor*, and especially coming from a man I like. It is sweet to some, but to me it seems hollow, and I despise it. If my conduct is such as to merit praise, let it be shown by the friendly pressure of the hand, or the lighting of the countenance, when we meet. Words are but the wasting of our breath, but actions warm the heart, cheer our drooping spirits, and animate us with firm resolves to overcome the difficulties we encounter. In future it will please me better to see by your actions that I have your confidence, than to hear you speak of it. How hauls the wind?"

"As at sundown, sir."

"Then we will hold our course, unless some event occurs to change it. I have sent for you to confide to you a plan I intend executing, and I desire to have your opinion on it."

"I am all attention, sir."

"*What think you of invading England?*"

"SIR!" exclaimed the astonished young man. "Invade England, and with such a fleet and land force as we possess? Surely, sir, you are jesting."

"By no means; I was never more sincere in my life. Listen. My intention is to make for the Isle of Man; but, in doing so, I shall take as long a circle as possible, in hopes of falling in with some of the numerous merchant-ships, and thus secure some prizes. I shall eventually make a descent on Whitehaven, and, by one good fire of English shipping, try to make some return for all the burnings in America. Next, it is my intention to make a friendly call upon some nobleman, and invite him to go aboard my ship, and then to allow him to return when the English Government shall conclude to establish a just and equitable exchange of prisoners with America. Should we accomplish these undertakings successfully, I shall not be at a loss for other work, and your most earnest longings for excitement shall be gratified. What think you, Mr. Fletcher, of the plans?"

"I could not conceive of any thing more bold," replied his officer, scarcely able to answer, so astonished was he at the cool, determined manner in which his chief spoke of his daring intentions.

"Do you think I will be likely to succeed?"

"Determination, coupled with prompt action, will accomplish wonders; still, I have fears that you meditate more, sir, than we will be able to perform."

"Pooh, Fletcher. Why, did I have the force I desire, London itself would not be safe. *This* plan would then sink into insignificance compared with what I should do. There may arise unlooked-for and unavoidable circumstances to frustrate my intentions, but such circumstances must not originate aboard my ship. I have a crew about me, from my first officer down, that I am proud of; in them I think can be placed the utmost confidence, and a readiness to do as bidden. Do you know, young man," he continued, dropping his tone to one of doubtful significance, "that I never had an officer sail with me who was subject to *homesickness* or sudden ailments?"

"I do not fully understand you, sir," replied Fletcher.

"It requires no great effort to comprehend my meaning," replied his superior, smiling at the somewhat puzzled look that rested upon the young man's face. "But listen patiently—for your duty does not require you on deck—and I will explain. It has, and always shall be, my ambition to do my duty as far as my judgment and abilities enable me; when I see a lack in others, I first endeavor to engender a right feeling, or, if that fails, to *enforce* one. The roses of my past life have not been without their thorns, and many an enemy have I made by what they were pleased to term my harshness and brutal treatment, but which I considered merely the enforcement of duty, practiced toward those under my orders upon the simple stand-point of strict obedience. I have succeeded where I am sure I should not have done, had I not have been my own counselor. How is it that I am able to do so much with my men? It is not necessary for me to tell you that much of the populace struggling against a mighty power are not so from pure patriotism; they engage in the strife simply to better their fortunes. I shall then adopt with my present crew, as I have with those it has been my pleasure hitherto to command, that bait for sordid minds, *great views of interest*. So much for my crew; now a word as to my officers. Those who seek the head of companies, or who rush to the quarter-deck of vessels as their commander, do so from various reasons. Some with the sincere desire and firm determination to succor their country at all hazards; while by far the greater number are influenced either by the drift of popular feeling or a hope of benefiting self. These latter soon tire when they are called to render active service. Could they always have their tent pitched in some pleasant grove, or lay at anchor in some beautiful harbor where *the button* would attract the eye of fair woman, and the ear drink in the flattering words that crowned them heroes, they would be content; but when they are called upon to win their laurels in deadly strife, their soldierly bearing vanishes, and they think the service does not quite agree with them. I have a remedy, Mr. Fletcher, for all these ailments. *For homesickness* I give the antidote of going home and staying there; and with such as may appear *dangerously ill*, I use the liberty of taking their

commissions and warrants from them and giving them to others of stronger nerve. Give me men who buckle on the sword because they feel it to be their duty; who sacrifice home and all its social ties because they believe their country's cause to be just and holy; give me the men who throw themselves into the fray with the one idea to conquer or to die, and who are too noble, too proud, to think themselves servants by the year, and I will fail in nothing!"

He rose from his seat, and paced the cabin-floor with rapid strides. His officer gazed upon him with admiration, and felt that chance had placed him under the command of a man made to govern his fellows. For some time the Captain continued his hasty walk; then, suddenly halting, he fixed his searching eye upon his companion and asked:

"What think you—am I right?"

"You are," replied Fletcher, rising.

They stood a moment contemplating each other; then, as if some irresistible impulse moved them, their hands met, and, with that grasp was cemented a friendship as warm and abiding as man to man is able to bestow.

CHAPTER IV.

HEZEKIAH'S YARN.

THE night passed without the lights of any cruiser heaving in sight. Early morning found Fletcher on deck, not gazing upon the wide and sunlit expanse of waters that tossed their tiny waves about him, but lost in that abstracted mood which so held him enchained at times. The storm that had, during the previous evening, given signs of its approach, was now only visible in a bank of clouds fast sinking in the Southern seaboard, having expended its fury upon some distant sea or rocky shore. The little ship, as if she felt a sympathy with the aspirations and longings of her commander, went dashing through the water, urged onward by the light yet "heavy" breeze still stirring. Hezekiah was, at the moment,

standing astern. Having just completed his toilet by a wash in salt water, he now seemed trying to discover, by his own ingenuity, their future movements.

"Say, you!" he suddenly exclaimed, addressing a sailor that stood near him, "s'pose you and I have a bit of chat, since it ain't nat'ral for men of the same ship bein' strangers to each other to remain so. What's your name?"

"William, when ashore, but Bill's long enough for a man to shout when the wind's howling," replied the seaman, in a gruff tone.

"S'pose you've got more made fast to the starn of Bill, but that's enough. I'm nobody more nor less than Hezekiah Hand, all the way from the State of Maine. How are you?"

"Can't complain," replied the man, smiling in spite of himself, at the Yankee's abruptness. "I didn't feel over and above hearty laying at anchor so long; but now we're under canvas and out of sight of land, I'm better."

"Reckon it did chafe some. But where on 'arth' are we heading for?"

"Can't say."

"S'pose not. Tell you what, mate, I'm jest about as fretful to get a chance of squinting over that gun the Captain's gin me charge of, as a gal is to get her first beau."

"Do you think you can hit a ship's side?"

"Wal, I reckon I can if I try uncommon hard. But I'm going to try my hand aloft and leave the hull to you."

"You've got a good opinion of yourself!"

"Yes—don't know but I have, seeing that it runs in our family."

"*Sail ho!*" came from the look-out. All conversation at once ceased. Every eye was fixed upon the horizon ahead. In a moment the Captain reached the deck, and, as the distant vessel could now be seen from below, his eye lit up at the prospect of a meeting.

"Aloft!" he shouted. "What do you make her out?"

"Can't say yet, sir; she's right abreast of a white cloud."

"Where are we, sir?" inquired Fletcher.

"Between Sicily and Cape Clear."

"Then yonder sail is likely to prove an Englishman?"

"Very probable."

"I make her out now, sir!" hailed the look-out.

"Well, what is she?"

"A brigantine, sir."

"How is she headed?"

"Nor'-nor'-west, sir."

"Get the men to quarters, Mr Fletcher, and work the ship up to yonder fellow. We will soon see what he's made of."

As the stranger had no suspicion of the *Ranger's* character, she came on slowly until within a mile or more, when her course was suddenly changed, and, from the hasty manner in which her extra canvas was set, it was evident something had been discovered that created alarm.

"Get as much extra sail, Mr. Fletcher, as yonder fellow has thrown out," ordered the Captain, the moment he saw the enemy's movements; "lay your course with her, sir, and set her exactly by the compass."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Well, how do we rate in sailing qualities?"

"Better than the stranger, sir—the sail draws a point more aft."

"That is as I would have it, and the saucy little *Ranger* is not so bad as she is represented. Now, Hand, he continued, addressing the Yankee, "I intend testing your qualities as a sharp-shooter. Get your gun ready, and when I tell you, fire across his bows. If he disregards it, see what you can do in shortening his sail."

Hand's face extended into a broad grin, and, with signs of impatience, he waited the moment when to make his boast good, or become the butt of his companions. The superior sailing qualities of the *Ranger* soon enabled her to reach the required distance. The signal being given, Hezekiah trained his piece and applied the match. The loud report of the gun the chase seemed inclined to obey, for her canvas was seen to flutter for a moment, but it again filled and he kept on.

"Are you ready?" said the Captain.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Let me see *now* what you can do. Strike at her!"

"Swan if I don't try for his head-gear," muttered the Yankee to himself. "That's the place to hit squirrels, and that's where I'll try this chap. Now, old blacky, let's see you throw

up," he said, as the match was applied a second time. "Phew! go it, streak o' lightning! I've hit her, by the hull of the 'Merican continent, I've hit her fair."

He was fairly beside himself, as he saw the ball carry away the jib-boom, and create at once the utmost confusion on board the chase.

"You have redeemed your word, my good fellow," exclaimed his commander, bestowing upon him a look of approbation, "and have brought him to."

"I knew I'd do it, sir, for I felt it a-coming. Gosh, ef that ain't pretty good rifle-shooting, seeing the sight is all by guess."

The commander of the brigantine, seeing how hopeless would be the attempt to escape, at once yielded, and the *Ranger* was soon within hailing distance.

"Brig ahoy!"

"Ahoy!"

"What's your name?"

"*Defiance*."

"What's your load?"

"Flaxseed."

"Where are you bound?"

"Ireland. What ship are you?"

"The Colonial ship-of-war *Ranger*."

A boat was now lowered, and Fletcher was sent to board the prize. All of value, together with her crew, was removed, when, after a consultation, it was considered best to burn her, which was accordingly done.

"Young man, you are winning a gallows for yourself," said the Captain of the *Defiance* to Fletcher, during the course of conversation that followed his arrival on board.

"Pray, what construction do you place upon our service?"

"Piracy. You are pirates—nothing else, sir!"

"Indeed! you are blunt in your words, and free in your judgments."

"The terms may seem harsh, still, I speak but the truth. My opinion is that of every nation in Europe."

"Excepting that of the one that harbored our vessel, whose coast we have but just left!" He said this with a smile full of irony. "But my commander is below, and I invite you to his presence."

"What may his name be?"

"You must receive your answer from him."

"Is he ashamed of the life he leads, that his first officer should withhold his name?"

Fletcher flung at the insolent Briton a glance so full of the fire of an honest indignation, that the Englishman for the moment placed his hand on his sword. "I do not bandy words with my prisoners!" he said, with a warmth which proved how deeply his soul was stirred. "You can go below, sir!" The Briton obeyed the order and passed into the Captain's presence.

The wind on the succeeding day was light, so that the progress of the *Ranger* was necessarily slow. No sail hove in sight, to awake into anxiety the hopes of either commander or crew. Hezekiah was the center of an admiring circle, whom he kept in a constant roar of laughter by his quaint expressions. Thus passed the slow-winged hours, with nothing to break the monotony that reigns on board of a man-of-war when the look-out fails in reporting the sight of an enemy's ship.

"Mates!" exclaimed Hand, on the morning of the third day, "this here's stale work."

"Sort o' rusty, that's a fact," replied one of the men, who was lolling against the foremast.

"What on 'arth's come of all the Britishers anyhow? Guess they've all gone off to 'Meriky, and ain't no idea we're so close at hand!"

"Don't you worry, Mr. State of Maine," replied Bill, "you'll have all the game you want to bring down, else I don't know our Captain."

"We're poking ahead the right way to find it, that's sure," returned the Yankee, going to the ship's side to relieve his mouth of its flood of tobacco-juice. "Cream a-tarter!" he exclaimed, as his eye rested on the water; "come here, mates, and take a look at this serpent. He's got wind of a fight, and has made up his mind to take a hand in burying the dead. I say, Bill, how'd you like to take that critter for a coffin?"

"A fellow would have time to turn over, and then wouldn't be in any danger of kicking off the cover," was the reply, as

the men gathered to the side, and saw an enormous shark floating lazily but a short distance from the ship.

"I'm p'intedly down on them varmints," said Hezekiah, with earnestness, as he watched the fish, "specially when they *gape*."

"Why so, mate?" asked one.

"Kase I've had a little to do with 'em."

"How?"

"They blockaded me once."

A loud laugh burst from his companions, but Hand quietly assured them that such was the fact.

"You can laugh, but it's as sure as shooting; and I can tell you what 'tis, them critters are a heap better at the business than a good many war-vessels."

"Let's have the yarn, High," was now clamored on all sides.

"Wal, I don't care ef I do, seeing we don't 'zactly know how to pass time," he returned, giving his pants a hitch, and settling himself into a comfortable position. "Now, first," he said, in a sententious tone, "what I'm going to tell is true; and second, if you snicker, I'll shut my mouth as tight as a ship's port in time o' peace. You see, mates, that this ain't the first ship's deck I've trod in my life, and I've been in a good many parts, if my mother didn't let me loose as soon as I'd have liked. I'd found my way down on the South Pacific coast in a whale ship, and after getting a load, our Captain made a port, and let some of us go ashore. There warn't much to be seen, that's sure, 'cept a few long, lank, knock-kneed sort of critters that lived 'bout them diggins. It didn't do us much good a-lookin' and a-motioning at them, so we made our way back to the shore—"

"You ought to have married one, High, and brought her along for company," broke in one of the men.

"Marry one on 'em! Jew-ru-salem! I'll be chawed to powder if I'd have one o' the critters to save the hull white race from dying out. But if you want me to bowse ahead, jest cork that hole in your head, and don't go for to ax questions till I've done. Arter we'd got back to the shore I felt kinder warm, so I told the boys I'd have a swim. They thought it wouldn't do much harm if they did wash off a

little of what had helped keep 'em warm all winter; so in we went. It warn't all level 'bout where we were, for the rocks were over two hundred feet high in places, and as we swum around we saw a good many holes that the water had made, and it warn't my nater' to keep from poking my nose into 'em. I came to one at last that had a sort of a beach running round one side on it, and so I made for it, and walked round to see where t'other end was. The boys followed, and arter we'd seen all, we turned to go back. There was one place that was jest about wide enough for us to walk, but when we got to it 'twas 'bout a foot under water, so you see we knew the tide was a-risin', and as we'd left our clothes clus down by the water, we jest kalk'lated if we didn't get back they'd get washed off. Wal, mates, when we got back and was about plunging in, I'm blessed if I didn't spy the back of one of the all-fired biggest sharks I ever did see. I give a yell as loud as a hull pack of Injins, and got a little further off from the water, kase the consarned snapping-turtle took a turn over on his side as he heard the splash, and give a smack or two of his lips, as if he sorter thought I'd make pretty good eating. 'That's sort of interesting,' says I to one of the men. 'Derned if it ain't,' says he. 'What's going to be did?' says I. 'Stay where we are,' says he. 'There ain't no use of that,' said I, 'kase it won't take long afore the water 'll be up high enough to float him, and then what's going to happen?' 'Spect one of us 'll get eat up—that's all,' says he. If that warn't about as cool an answer as ever I heard, and to cap all, one of the boys says he'd be willing to draw lots to see who'd walk into the water first. I wasn't for doing that, kase I'd be struck stun blind afore I'd a-gone if I lost. It would have been like courting death for to have gone and gin myself up that way, as much as to say, 'Here, you white-livered, open-jawed critter; I've been a-whaling and ain't in a bad condition, so jest see how I suit your tastes.' Wal, mates, you see that the boys kept proposing this thing and t'other, but none on 'em struck my fancy. The water kept a-getting higher and higher, and what to do I'm blessed if I knew. It warn't no use of staying there, kase the shark kept tacking to and fro, giving us the benefit of his hull 'tention, and blockading us like a frigate does an enemy's port,

and only waiting for water to float him in. At last it struck me that s'posing we got out of his sight, wouldn't he take a notion to leave? I told the rest, and we walked back again into the cave, where we could keep an eye on him, but he couldn't see us. We waited a long time, and at last we saw his dorsal fin standing out to sea, when we took to the water, and swam as softly as we could, until we reached the place where we started from, but not a stitch of clothes could we find."

"Then you had to go to the ship naked?"

"Of course we had, and—"

"Sail ho!" came in piercing tones from the look-out, bringing to an abrupt end the finale of the yarn.

"Derned," he exclaimed, springing to his feet as if shot, and bringing his hands together with a sound like the report of a pistol, "derned, mates, if I don't believe telling that ar' shark story ain't brought a ship about. I'll be stewed for a chowder if I don't try it agin some day, when things look dull."

"Where away?" called the second officer, a young man named White.

"Off our lee bow, sir."

The information soon spread through every part of the ship that a sail was in sight, and all hands mustered on deck. It was at first conjectured that the distant vessel was armed, but as it approached nearer she proved to be a merchantman.

"You are, no doubt, disappointed," remarked the Captain, to Fletcher.

"In what, sir?"

"That the chances of battle are again denied us."

"I am not anxious to engage in strife; yet, when it comes, I shall try and do my duty."

"I conjectured wrong, then, for I thought you eager for a fray."

"What led you to form such an opinion, sir?"

"From your gloomy manner. Depend upon it, Mr. Fletcher, that you are doing yourself a great injustice in withholding your confidence from me. Hand," he abruptly added, "bring yonder fellow to with a shot across his bows."

"Ay, ay, sir," and the next instant the command was obeyed.

"Far more obedient than was the *Defiance*, though the latter was compelled, in honor to her name, to show *some* obstinacy," said the commander, as his foe checked her headway.

"Yonder, sir, is land," exclaimed the young man.

"Yes, I see it," was the reply.

"England, I suppose."

"Yes, sir; and I am tempted to say that it is a rather bold measure for one ill-armed vessel to make prizes at the very threshold of her doors. But it's nothing to what this ship shall do, if she does not go to pieces, or is sunk by iron hail. Mr. Fletcher, speak yonder fellow, and order him to come about."

The young man hailed as ordered, and, in turn, his command was complied with. The ship proved to be loaded with an assorted cargo, and being a prize of much value, it was determined to remove the few prisoners then on board the *Ranger* to her decks, and send her to Brest. As soon as this was done, the commander ordered Fletcher, together with the rest of his officers, to his cabin, and there informed them of the undertakings that now lay before them.

CHAPTER V.

THE TWO BEAUTIES OF SOMERSET HOUSE.

SITUATED near the ocean, on the west coast of England, stood a house whose architecture indicated its age to be of the past century. The massive stone walls and narrow windows gave the whole more the appearance of a stronghold than an abode of peace. The huge oaks that grew upon the smooth broad lawn, had there truly been "tongues in trees," must have told of many a tale of arms, and how their refreshing shade had succored both victor and vanquished. The ancestors of its present owner had feasted both king and noble within the building's spacious halls.

It was a lovely afternoon. Though early spring, still the

air was soft and balmy, and nature seemed to woo one to a ramble amid its wilderness of budding beauties. Slowly passing along one of the numerous graveled walks were two young women, in the full enjoyment of health and beauty. The younger was mistress of the mansion. Her figure, though small, was graceful. Purity sat enthroned on her fine face. As the bud of womanhood was so full of promise, what might not be the realization, when the flower expanded in all its natural loveliness! Her hair of soft brown hung about her shoulders in a wilderness of curls, which, being combed away, revealed the delicate contour of her face, shading yet showing the fair and truly noble brow. Kate Somerset was beautiful; yet, when compared with her companion, she was not the fairest nor the most provocative of remark.

Grace Maitland, that companion, was an orphan. Her parents had removed to America some years previous, where the rude life of a frontier settlement soon proved fatal to her mother's fragile health. Her father struggled against his grief for his child's sake, but, ere long, he, too, entered the grave's darkness, and Grace was alone. He had been enabled, however, from the wreck of a large fortune, to secure a moderate competence for his child, and feeling that death must soon claim him, had endeavored to procure her a protector in the person of Mr. Somerset, whom he had known and esteemed from childhood. Accordingly, he had written that gentleman, and the result was the immediate departure of Mr. Somerset to America. Arriving here, he was much surprised with her beauty of soul, as well as of face, and willingly took upon himself the office of guardian. Most faithfully had he discharged his trust—Grace having been, at the time of which we write, an inmate of his house for upward of three years. In type of beauty, Grace was like none other. Her dark hair, parted smoothly back from her brow, was confined in a broad plait at the back of her superbly poised head. Her eyes were of the deepest blue, but from the shadow of the long lashes they seemed almost black. The profuse richness of her hair, the light of her expressive eye, and the vivacity of the smile which seemed ever to rest on her countenance, enshrouded her, as it were, in a divinity of grace. Yet, fair as she was, she was totally unconscious of her extraordinary charms.

No pride, no haughtiness, no coquetry, no consciousness of superiority ever were visible in action or word. Her deportment was the extreme of modesty and reserve; her voice, soft, and at times tinged with sadness, rung with the clearness of a chord struck in the minor key, and betrayed that, young as she was, she had tasted of life's sorrows. Long though their walk had been, yet very little had been said, for the manner of the elder had checked the words which, at the start, proceeded in a constant stream from the rosy lips of the saucy Kate. Upon reaching the broad porch which bounded two sides of the mansion, they seated themselves, and, for a time, busied themselves with their own thoughts. What they were it required but little art to divine. Kate patted the ground impatiently with her little foot, or, brushing back the heavy curls which *would* fall over her face, smiled at her own vivacious thoughts. Grace sat with her eye fixed upon the ever-moving waters of the distant ocean. The view seemed to recall memories of the past; that they were sad was evident from the tear which glistened in her eye, or the long-drawn sigh which she strove in vain to check.

"How stupid you are, Grace," at length remarked Kate, with an impatient gesture, wearying of the silence.

"Why?" was the simple question of her companion, as she raised her eyes inquiringly to the other's face.

"Why? How foolish to ask such a question! Do you suppose I would hesitate about the matter? Not a bit of it, but would only be too glad that the opportunity presented itself."

"You speak at random, Kate. It is a matter of the most vital importance to me, and requires my most careful thought."

"Well, well! I suppose you know best, as you, having a few more years experience, are presumed to be the wisest. Still, I do not see why you require so much time, and give the gentleman so much delay, which must be heart-rending in the extreme. Do you love him, Grace?"

A sigh was the only answer.

"Perhaps you are thinking of your early love," continued the young lady, not noticing the pain her remark produced. "If so, you are but fostering a memory that will yield you naught but unhappiness."

"If I do at times allow *his* image to fill my thoughts it is but natural," replied Grace, a slight tremor perceptible in her voice.

"Grace, I really believe you love him," said her companion, quickly, narrowly watching the effect her words might produce.

"To your father I am deeply indebted for the home he has given me, and for the companionship of his daughter, who is as dear as a sister," replied Grace, fondly embracing her; "and to her I can confide my sorrow. I do, then, Kate, freely acknowledge that my love for *him* still abides. Oh, how memory carries me back to days forever gone! How in my dreams I see him, hear him whisper anew his earnest assurances of love, and feel him gather me to his breast, and press fond kisses on my brow! Kate, I do love him yet, and shall love him forever!"

"Even after all he has done?" exclaimed Kate, in surprise.

"Yes, even after all that I have *heard* of him. I can but think that, could I see him again, many things that now seem too true could be explained to the entire satisfaction of your father."

"I am not so sure of that," was the rejoinder, "for my father is not the man to condemn a person unheard. In this case it was long before he could believe all that was told him; but, when the truth was *forced* upon him, he then did as he considered his duty, and with all the kindness yet firmness that would have been employed toward me had I been placed in the position you filled."

"But, my dear Kate, what was the principal charge against him?"

"Disloyalty."

"And that was all?"

"By no means. That is but the smoothest name we can give it. Trace the evils that follow in its wake and see what it leads to."

"It has led him to commit no crime."

"Indeed! Is piracy no crime?"

"It most certainly is; but surely he has not resorted to that?"

"Alas, Grace, it is but too true, for he has been seen on

board ships fitted out to prey upon the merchantmen vessels of this country. But why talk of this further? You have parted with him of your own free will, and now have a suitor who is in every way fitted for you, and who waits your decision. He will be here to-day on his way to his vessel, and before he goes I should like to know that the time is definitely fixed."

"Well, Kate, I suppose I must yield my consent; but, oh, I can *never* love him," replied the young lady, and she shuddered at the thought of wedding one when her heart was irrevocably given to another, even though that other were unworthy.

"Nonsense, Grace. There is every thing about him for a young lady to admire. He is handsome, rich, of a good family, and withal an officer in his Majesty's service. Depend upon it that the simple friendship you now feel will grow into a warm and enduring love."

"Perhaps it may," was the maiden's reply; "and, as I have decided upon my answer, I hope it will. But had I my own free will, I should never marry. Your father advises it, and I consent."

So earnest was their converse, that neither had noticed a vessel which had anchored opposite the house, nor the boat which had left her side. As Grace ceased speaking, the sound of footsteps reached her ear. Looking up quickly, her gaze fell upon the form of him who sought her hand.

He was a young man of prepossessing appearance, which was heightened by the showy uniform of the British navy.

"By my word, but you hold poor watch," he said, after the usual greeting had passed between them, "to allow me to approach so near without hailing."

"It is all Grace's fault," replied Kate, smiling mischievously. "But we are really glad to see you, Lieutenant Vaughn. When did you land on our shore?"

"But an hour back. Yonder lays my vessel."

"And how long shall you favor us with your company?"

"Unless I am unexpectedly summoned, I have leave till to-morrow morning."

"Then, I conclude, you will be absent for a long time."

"Perhaps forever, Miss Somerset," he replied, glancing at

Grace, and speaking mournfully. "My vessel will be ordered to the Colonies, and, without doubt, we shall meet the rebels. I shall do my duty, and my chance of meeting death in the fray is as good as another's."

"Do not talk thus," replied Kate, earnestly, while her cheek paled. "I have heard that the rebels have scarcely any vessels, so I have good grounds for hoping that your ship may not fall in with any antagonist."

"It is a mistake," he answered. "The Colonies have more privateers, as they call them, than we have all along believed, and I assure you they are no mean enemy."

"So I can easily believe, for they are our very selves. What vessel are you now attached to?"

"The *Drake*—a sloop of war carrying twenty guns."

"Shall you sail directly for America?"

"I believe not. Our orders compel us to stop at Carrickfergus, but for what purpose I am not informed."

At this point Kate bethought her that, as Vaughn had so few hours to spend with them, it would no doubt be wise in her to beat a hasty retreat, and leave the young man to pass the time with her whom he looked upon in the light of a betrothed. Making a trivial excuse, and disregarding the earnest motion made by Grace to have her remain, she left them, and hastened into the house. Allowing a few moments to elapse, the young man at length seated himself by the side of the fair girl, and, gazing with admiration into the depths of her eyes, he said, in a voice low and musical in its tone:

"Has Miss Maitland no word to say to me?"

"I am sorry to hear of your sudden departure, sir, and trust you may be restored in safety to those who love you ere long," replied the girl, looking down, and trembling at the thought of what their conversation was tending to.

"*Sir!*" he replied, strongly emphasizing the word. "I have thought I held a place in your affections which ignored so cold a title. I am about leaving you, as you have already heard. I am about engaging an enemy brave and valiant as ourselves, and may meet the fate that the warrior oftentimes covets. That I love you, Miss Maitland, you are well aware, and long for the moment when, with your own free will,

you may become my wife. I have asked for your hand, and you have requested time to frame your answer, which was quite right in a matter of such importance. This has been granted, time and time again, until now that the moment of parting draws so near, I most earnestly request that you will withhold it no longer. Grace, will you be my wife?"

"I will."

The lips seemed to part mechanically, and the words uttered in a voice that showed the heart did not respond to them. Grace Maitland was acting a part; she was doing what she had been taught was her duty. Kind as was Mr. Somerset, still he was a man that believed in sacrificing much for the sake of attaining wealth and station, and, although he had not forced the attentions of Vaughn upon Grace, still, in their frequent interviews upon this subject, he had pointed out to her the great advantage which would accrue to herself from such an alliance, and which would forever debar her from all thoughts of ever renewing the intercourse which had before subsisted between herself and one who he felt was wholly unworthy her. He had already painted in such glowing colors what he conceived to be her old lover's crime that she had refused to see him further, and by her actions banished him from her presence.

The young man, though noticing the manner in which his question was answered, was too proud to inform her of it either by voice or action. He was attracted toward Grace more by her transcendent beauty and queenly bearing than by any very strong affection, although he had often endeavored to impress upon her the strength and purity of his attachment. He was well aware that she was of a good family and quite independent of her protector as far as pecuniary matters were concerned. Her apparent indifference to his suit had only made him the more eager to possess her; and it may be admitted that he felt a more tender interest in her than toward any other woman whom he had ever met.

"And you love me, dear girl?" he asked, encircling her waist, and drawing her toward him.

"I will try," was the faint response.

"Try!" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Listen," she said, interrupting him; and raising her head,

she looked earnestly into his face. "I have something to tell you that should have been mentioned before."

"Well, well, go on," he replied, quickly.

"I have loved another."

"Well!" his reply was still calm.

"I love him still," she stammered, expecting an outburst of feeling on his part, but to her surprise, his answer was calm to all outward appearances, although it cost him a struggle to keep up the appearance. "And are you now willing to make me your wife?"

"I am. But pray let me hear all of this."

"You know my early history, and how, until the past few years, I dwelt with my father in America. There I became acquainted with him to whom I gave my heart. My father approved of my choice, and had he not died we should have been married. When Mr. Somerset came at my parent's dying request, and took me under his kind guardianship, it was understood that after a suitable time we were to be united. Circumstances prevented his visiting me for a long time, and even when he did come our marriage was deferred day after day, until at length the revolt of the Colonies broke out. A short time after, Mr. Somerset discovered that my affianced husband had turned traitor, and informed me of the fact, portraying the evils that evidently would follow him, perchance leading him to a death upon the scaffold. Suffice it to say that I discarded him, and as Mr. Somerset instantly returned to this country, I have never seen him since, and I trust I never shall, for it would but add to my misery."

"And still you love him?"

"I do."

"But if you hope never to meet him again, can not you overcome this feeling?"

"Time may work the change—for your sake I hope it may—yet you little know how deep-rooted is the sentiment."

"Let us speak no more of it, as it causes both of us pain," he said, abruptly. Then, after a moment's thought, he added: "will you not tell me his name?"

"Pray, do not ask me," she replied, earnestly, "for if you chanced to meet in battle, and one chanced to fall by the other's hand, I would wish to remain ignorant of the fact."

"True. Come, let us go in," he said, rising. Offering his arm they entered the parlor.

It need not be supposed that by his wish to ascertain the name of his rival, he was, therefore, ignorant of his identity. While Mr. Somerset tarried in America, Vaughn had seen Grace, and was at once struck with her appearance. From inquiry he ascertained that she was the betrothed of another, and with unscrupulous skill at once set about removing this obstacle. Having some slight acquaintance with Mr. Somerset, he hastened to improve their mutual friendship. He was received by that gentleman with evident satisfaction. From him came most of the information that had estranged the lovers, which, although true in the main, was painted in such glowing colors, and exaggerated to such an extent as to the enormities of young Fletcher's delinquencies, that it could not fail to bring about the desired result. Vaughn soon saw that it was useless for him to make advances toward Grace; hence, with wily purpose, he sought the acquaintance of the young man, with whom he endeavored to quarrel. His design was, however, frustrated by the generous temper of his rival. Calm as was his speech, and unruffled as was his manner as he led Grace up the steps into the house, there was a fire burning within his breast—an ardent hope that fate might smile upon him, to bring him face to face with this man in the strife of battle.

The evening passed pleasantly away to all save Grace. Mr. Somerset had greeted the Lieutenant warmly and exerted himself to please, for he was highly elated at the decision of his ward. As the party was about retiring for the night, an order came for Vaughn to repair on board ship, as the weather betokened a storm and there was no good harbor near. He instantly obeyed, having fixed, however, for his marriage to take place immediately upon his return.

"How sad to think of the fate that might befall him," remarked Kate, as they were retiring.

"He does but run the risk attending his calling," answered Grace.

"How can you speak so calmly," returned her companion. "Were he mine I should know no rest until he returned to me in safety. Oh, I pray he may return!"

Grace looked quickly up to mark upon Kate's face a look of commingled hope and fear. What was Vaughn to her that she should betray such sudden emotion? A woman's intuitions are sharp and quick. Grace read the heart of her friend as clearly as if it were a crystal vase.

"She loves him and yet knows it not. Perhaps," and the fair girl clasped her hands, while a ray of hope lighted up her features, "but no, I will not conjecture—let the future determine."

CHAPTER VI.

HEZEKIAH IN SEARCH OF A PILOT.

It was a beautiful morning. All was life and animation on board the *Ranger*. The waters sung a merry song as they danced under her cutwater, or broke in tiny ripples along her side. Since we last parted with the good craft, she had cautiously, yet boldly, neared the English coast, and we now find her imprudently looking into the numerous harbors which lined its shores, capturing and sinking numerous vessels that lay at anchor within them.

"Mr. Fletcher!"

"Sir," replied the young man, nearing his commander's side.

"I tire of this small fry."

"Let us then try something larger."

"Such are my intentions. I shall improve the information gathered from the fishermen we overhauled yesterday, and enter the harbor of Carrickfergus. We should have retained one of them as pilot, although I doubt, upon second thought, whether they knew enough of that harbor to take us safely in."

"You will not incur the risk of entering without a pilot?"

"I most certainly shall not."

"Then we must capture a pilot?"

"That is our only way. Where is Hand?"

"Below, sir."

"Have him called."

"I have a small job for you," he continued, as the Yankee made his appearance.

"All right, sir," replied Hezekiah; "tell me what it is, and I'll do it ef it spoils my fore-piece."

"I want you to go on shore."

"Alone, sir?"

"No. You will take as many men as you think best, after ascertaining what it is I wish you to do. I intend entering the port of Carrickfergus, and as we are not acquainted with the channel, I must get a pilot. You now know what you are to go on shore for. Do you think you can accomplish the object of your errand?"

"Guess so, sir, if any man aboard this ship can. If you ain't got any more commands, I'll pick my crew and be off in a whiff."

"All that I have to say further is, that I leave it entirely to your judgment how to act. You can adopt any disguise you wish, only be sure that you fail not in your errand. We shall stand off and on until you show signals, which will be three blue lights. Now make your preparations with all speed, and when we arrive as near the shore as prudence will allow, be ready to take to your boat."

"Ay, ay, sir!" and he hastened away.

The vessel was now headed to a line of cliffs, where the operations of the adventurer would be less likely to attract attention, although little was to be feared, owing to the *Ranger's* being disguised as a merchantman. After approaching as near as possible, the boat was lowered, and her crew throwing themselves upon their oars with a will, shot quickly from the ship's side. Hand had disguised himself in the costume of a man-of-war's man having but one arm. He was, apparently, well worn down by long service.

"I say, mates," remarked Bill, "Hand's got himself pretty well rigged, and I'm blessed if he don't look as though a cannon ball had took away his arm sure enough. High, you're an out and out nor'-wester, choppin' round a breaker; nobody knows where you'll fetch up next."

"Tie up your clapper," exclaimed the Yankee, adopting a voice that suited well with his assumed character, "and lay back with a will on them ar' oars, you ugly breed of sea dogs."

"Ay, ay, Captain, it's back we go if we break oars. But if it ain't wrong, we'd like to know what we've got to do when we get ashore?"

"Stay by the boat and play longshoremen, if I don't want you to get me out of some scrape. I'm thinking it won't take much trouble to get one of these fish-catchers to go with us, 'specially when he feels a pistol agin his head, so I've a mind to take a walk up to that fine house yonder, and see what sort of people live there. P'raps they'll give a feller a few coins, or something to wet his whistle with."

"You'd better stick to the business you were sent on, and not go a-visiting on your own hook," replied Bill, not relishing the idea of Hand being allowed more scope than the rest.

"Don't *you* fret 'bout me, kase I'm no crab without a claw. I can take care on myself, I reckon. I hain't never been ashore in these parts afore, and I'd like to see how these Britishers live at hum. 'Vast pulling," he added, as they neared the shore.

Having landed, Hand at once started off toward the mansion upon which he had fixed his eyes, taking the most circuitous route to reach the summit of the cliff. Reaching the level land, he made his way to the dwelling, which was none other than that of Mr. Somerset. Grace and Kate were taking their usual evening walk, and before our Yankee was aware, they suddenly met in turning the sharp angle of one of the numerous walks.

"Good evening," he said, without the least hesitancy, losing, with surprising tact, the idiom so peculiar to him. "Beg pardon, ladies, if I did blunder on you rather sudden."

"Who are you?" asked Kate.

"A man-o'-war's-man, Miss, and seeing as how both wind and waves ain't used me over gently, I don't carry as pretty a figure-head as some people."

"You do look somewhat battered, but I hope your nature is not as hard as your face is in appearance," replied Kate, with a roguish smile.

"Not it, Miss. On the contrary, the older I grow the tenderer my heart gets. It wouldn't be well for the man that would harm either of you pretty ones, while old Bob was within easy range."

"Where did you lose your arm?" inquired Grace.

"Over among the Colonies."

"You have then been lately in service?"

"Yes, Miss, and would be now, if I wasn't like an old anchor with one fluke that has been thrown ashore to rust the rest of his days."

"When do you think this war will be ended?"

"Can't say, Miss. The Yankees fight without giving ground."

"Surely you can't doubt but that we will conquer them?"

"It ain't right for a British seaman to say any thing else; but, I don't know, Miss, how the war will end. They've sot their minds to whip us, and they'll fight till every man's dead afore they spring their luff and fall under our lee."

"Have they many ships?"

"More than we thought they had on the start, Miss."

"Did you succeed in taking many prisoners?" asked Grace, hurriedly, as Kate hurried on in advance, evidently to bring out something with which to "wet the whistle" of the old tar.

"Some few, Miss."

"Do you remember any of their names?"

"I might, Miss, if I heard any one speak them over. It's likely you've got some friends in Ameriky, that have turned rebels."

"I did have friends there, but now I can not call them by that name. There was a young man, an acquaintance of my father, who turned traitor, that I would be glad to learn something of. His name is Fletcher—"

"Ernest Fletcher?" asked Hand, quickly.

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"Reckon I do *some*, seeing he's first officer aboard my ship."

Scarcely had the words escaped his lips, when he saw how fatally they could be used. He might have betrayed the object his vessel had in her dangerous visit to the English coast. Seizing Grace by the arm with rudeness, he said, in his natural voice:

"I've said a thing or two more than I ought, but it don't go no further than you, if I have to take you with me. You're cute enough to know that I couldn't be here unless some ship

brought me, and, at this minute, ain't far off. So I'll tell you all, as I've let out so much. I belong to the ship *Ranger*, and Mr. Fletcher's her first officer. If you take a look yonder, you'll see her standing off and on, waiting for me to get through this job I was sent on. I wasn't sent to this house, and if I'd stayed away, my blasted tongue wouldn't have blabbed what I've jest told you. Now, Miss, you know Mr. Fletcher, don't you?" Hezekiah smiled at her, in what he deemed to be a perfectly irresistible manner. "And if you know him you *must* love him, *sure*."

"I did respect him once."

"Once! What on 'arth could set *you* agin *him*?"

"The course of conduct he is bent upon pursuing."

"That means 'cause he's turned rebel, as the Britishers call us, I s'pose. There's a heap more lies told 'bout Ameriky than's true, young lady; but it don't harm us, kase we'll come out one of these days right side up, and be as big a country as all Europe. Now, I jest tell you quick what you've got to promise, and if you don't I'll take you 'board ship with me, as you're a live gal."

"What is it?"

"You mustn't let a human know what I've told you."

"I promise. Your secret is safe enough with me."

"I'd like to ask your name, if it ain't too much?"

"That I must refuse to tell you. How is Mr. Fletcher?"

"Well enough, Miss, 'cept he's sort o' gloomy and onhappy. I don't know how a man feels when he falls in love, kase I never met the gal yet what suited me out and out; but I'm thinking *he's been in love*!"

"Does he ever speak of home?"

"Not a word, as ever I heard. He's oncommon anxious to get into battle, and what few fights we've been in, he acts as if he'd 'bout as lief be killed as not. He's oncommon venture-some."

Grace was on the point of replying, when Kate reappeared, armed with a decanter of "Old Scotch," from which the mock-majesty's man refreshed himself with a deep draught, and muttering his thanks, was soon jogging on his way, directing his steps to where the rude homes of the fishermen could be seen dotting the summit of the cliff. Approaching one that was

some distance remote from its fellows, he knocked, his summons being answered by a child.

"You ain't all alone, little one?" he asked, as he glanced inside.

"Yes, sir," replied the child. "Mother's gone up to the town, and father's down on the beach, getting ready to go fishing."

"Sorry 'bout that, kase I'd like to see him."

"You can soon find him, sir."

"Show us the way then, and I'll go."

"Take this path till you come to the cliff. Then follow the edge till you come to an oak tree, where there's another path that leads down to the shore," she replied, pointing out the direction.

"Where does your father sell his fish?" he asked, in leaving.

"All over, sir. Sometimes as far as Carrickfergus."

"He's the man for me, then," soliloquized the Yankee, as, bidding the child good-by, and dropping a coin in her hand, he started forward. Hand soon reached the desired spot, and found the sturdy fisherman making preparations for instant departure. Before hiring, or compelling the man to go with him, it was necessary first to discover whether he was competent to pilot the ship. This was only to be discovered by close questioning. So he at once began:

"Pretty rough path you have in coming from aloft."

"Ay, you may well say that. It isn't quite as easy to tread as the ratlings of a ship," said the fisherman, pausing from his labor.

"What do you know about the rigging of a ship?" asked Hand.

"More than you think I do. Perhaps I might tell what part of a ship's rigging is filled by the deckyard."

"You wouldn't be much of a sailor and do that either. Come, Mr. fisherman, tell me how you would go to work to rig the main-yard, and I'll give you a man-of-war's-man's hand to shake in friendship."

"Center the yard, and on each side place jeer-blocks and top-sail sheet-blocks—that's the first thing. The next is to truss pendant and truss strop on starboard side, and truss strop truss pendant on port side. Then—"

"You needn't go any further, 'cause I see you know how, and it's a long story to tell the whole on it. Here, take my hand and give it a hearty shake, for you're a sailor every inch. It's a lasting shame that you should turn fisherman. If you only knew the harbors about here, you might make a better living as a pilot."

"I do know every harbor for miles around, but I had a fall from aloft, that has put a stop to my going to sea; besides, I have a wife and child, and I don't care to be from them. But ain't you out of your latitude?"

"Some little. I'm trying to make the port of Carrickfergus, but don't know how to shape my course. If you know so many of the ports about here, mayhaps you know of it?"

"I know the harbor as well as the ground we're on."

"Is it a hard one to enter?"

"Not very, if you know the ground."

"Could you take a ship in?"

"Yes; but what do you ask me that question for?"

"Kase I've got a job for you."

"You! what are you trying to come at?"

"Nothing but what's simple enough. I've a ship that I want to get into that harbor, and you've got to be her pilot."

"Where is she?" he asked, looking at Hand somewhat savagely.

"Look over the bows of your boat and you'll see her."

"What ship is she?"

"That ain't got nothing to do with the matter, no how. I want to know whether you'll take her in?"

"S'pose I say no?"

"You can make up your mind to say yes—that I say for sartin," was the determined reply.

In uttering the last sentence, Hezekiah had assumed his own natural voice and manner. Apparently the fisherman did not notice the change, or entirely comprehend all that he had heard. At last a sudden light seemed to break upon him, as, glancing toward the vessel, and then fixing his eye upon Hand, he continued, sternly:

"You're not the man you want to make out, and upon looking close at your ship, she ain't got an honest look."

"It don't make much difference whether you like that ship

or not. You see I'm under orders to bring you aboard, and I'll do it jest as sure as if you was a tom-cod on the Banks."

"It's easier to talk than to do, my fine fellow," replied the man, determinedly. "I'm inclined to think you're a rebel, only I don't see how you got in these waters. However, as I'm a good servant to his majesty, it's my duty to get help, and take you prisoner."

"You hain't got men and cutlasses enough to do *that*, and there ain't no use your trying to get away, kase you're going with me. You needn't fear but you'll get well paid; so don't be a fool, but come right along."

"Not without a trial, my hearty. I'm an older man than you, but, as I've two arms and you've but one, we're about even."

"You're wrong agin, Mr. fishing-tackle. It's uncommon handy when a man can grow another arm when he feels inclined," he said, leisurely unbuttoning his jacket, and releasing his left arm from confinement. "There's a wedge driven for you, only it's mussed like, being tucked up so long, and I ain't quite so full-breasted as I was. But that ain't all, mate," he added, drawing a pistol, "I'll open ports and give you a broad-side if you don't keep a civil tongue, and move on as I tell you."

"Here's at you in spite of your two arms and a pistol!" exclaimed the other, throwing himself so suddenly upon the Yankee, that the weapon was knocked from his grasp and himself prostrated upon the beach.

"Streak o' lightnin', but I'll dust your eyes for that!" he shouted, grasping his foe and using his best exertions to throw him off.

Hand had underrated the strength of his opponent. He found the arms which embraced him hard and muscular, and soon saw that the fisherman's powers of endurance were nearly equal to his own. For a time he would obtain a momentary advantage, but the loose nature of the ground afforded him no hold, and he would invariably fall back again. As that part of the beach was visible from the cliff, Hand became fearful that some one would note their struggle, and come to his foe's assistance. At last a happy thought struck him, which he at once hastened to put into execution. Laying perfectly quiet

for a time, he released his right arm by a powerful and sudden jerk, and grasping a handful of sand, threw it into the face of his antagonist, filling his mouth and eyes, thus causing him to loose his hold at once.

"How do you like sanding, you lubber?" was his greeting, as he rose to his feet and secured his weapon. "Derned if I ain't a mind to put a ball through you for the fall you gave me. Blow and sputter away, but if you take my advice you won't swaller any, kase it won't go through you quite as easy as a piece of beef. But come along, kase time won't wait for me, and it'll soon be dark. Oh, you can't see, eh? Well, it's your fault, so you ain't got no one to blame. Give me your hand, and I'll keep you from breaking your neck over the rocks. It's kinder sore, ain't it? You'll see all the better, though, how to take the *Ranger* into port when it works out," and with a continuance of such remarks he led the way back to where his companions waited.

"Well, High, you've got back at last, have you?" asked Bill, as he reached them. "You've been long enough to get a boat's load of pilots."

"Not as gritty as this chap," was the reply.

"You didn't have any trouble? The boys had made up their mind that you'd lost your way, or was taken prisoner, and were going to take a look for you."

"I'm much obliged to them, but, seeing I've arrived, they won't be put to that trouble."

"So I see. But how come you so covered with sand?"

"Been a-rolling," was the short reply.

"What started you at that fun?" was the question, accompanied by a loud laugh.

"Kase that ar' fish-taker made up his mind to take me prisoner, and you see that's jest what had got into my head to do with *him*. First I says yes, and he says no; then I says no, and he yes. Seeing as how we couldn't agree, up he jumps all on a sudden, and at me like a white squall. First thing I knows I was laying on my back, keel up, and old fishey a-top, like a big barnacle."

"Guess sand don't feel over pleasant 'twixt your shirt and skin?"

"It's a heap better than feeling it in your eyes. The derned

critter wouldn't give over pummeling me till I played pepper-box with my fist, and it's awful lucky if he don't lose his eyesight, for I have dosed his windows with some uncommon large pebbles."

"Does he know the harbor?" asked Bill, after a moment's glance at the painful condition of their prisoner.

"Says he does."

"But what does he know 'bout a ship?"

"He's all right. I asked questions enough to find out *that*. He's none of your longshoremen, but an out-and-out salt. But we ain't got no more time for talk, so light the signals, and we'll push off as soon as the ship comes in sight."

The seaman produced the tapers, and, going close to the face of the cliff, lit them. A blue, ghastly light soon shone over the men and boat, and far out upon the darkened waters of the sea.

CHAPTER VII.

IN AND OUT OF PORT.

THE sun was gilding, with its retiring rays, the summit of the waves, which a stiff breeze had called into commotion, when the *Ranger* could be seen, on the afternoon following the capture of the fisherman, standing off and on the port of Carrickfergus, yet at such a distance as not to attract suspicion by her movements. Within the harbor were numerous vessels lying quietly at anchor, little suspecting that an enemy, and one of that nation they affected to so much despise, was hovering near, like a bird of prey, ready to pounce upon them. Perhaps they felt all the more secure from the fact that a sloop of war lay at anchor in the harbor, whose twenty guns frowned certain death upon any enemy. The sun had set, and the dark headlands grew all the darker as they loomed against the deep blue of the sky beyond. The long, rumbling echoes of the sunset gun came faintly across the water reaching the ears of the hardy crew, who wistfully gazed out over the *Ranger's* bulwarks.

"Mr. Fletcher, have you observed the conduct of our pilot, as I ordered you to do?"

"I have, sir, and think it would be well to have a watch upon his actions."

"My own opinion. But think you that he would peril his own life in the attempt to sink my ship upon some hidden rock?"

"He is sullen, and withal a man of strong determination. I really can not help but think that he would willingly run the risk."

"Have you offered him the reward I named?"

"Yes, sir. For the moment his face lit up, and his manner indicated secret pleasure, but it was only for the moment."

"Send him to me, Mr. Fletcher, and do you remain away. Stay; you may tell Hand that I wish him to come within hearing distance, but to act as though he did not notice us."

The Captain's face wore an angry look, and his eye burned fiercely, as he paced the deck, waiting the fisherman's arrival. He had watched the man closely, and the suspicion that he could not be trusted impressed itself upon him. Hand had not given him the entire history of his adventures on shore, consequently his commander was not aware of the trouble he had in securing the man.

"Pilot," he said, as he came up, "you are aware of the duty you are expected to perform, and also know that your reward shall be large, provided that you are faithful, and carry my vessel where I would have her. You know this harbor perfectly?" he fixed his keen eye full upon him.

"Every fathom, sir," replied the man, positively.

"And, by your guidance, we expect that every fathom shall be safely passed."

"I'll do my best, sir. It's a queer way—your sending a party on shore to get a pilot, when if you'd shown a piece of bunting, one would have come out that followed it for a living. I must say it, sir, though I'm no landsman aboard ship, and know how to speak to my superiors, that the rough handling yonder man gave me wasn't likely to bring the best feelings toward you or your ship."

"No matter what your feelings were or will be," replied the Captain, sternly. "I ordered that boat's crew ashore,

and they obeyed me in bringing you with them. I give you two alternatives from which to choose. You either remain on board until I am done with you, and do your duty faithfully, for which you shall be rewarded, or I will hang you from yonder yard-arm. You must further know that if I see the least signs of treachery in the management of this ship, I will blow your brains out on the spot. To save you the trouble of conjecturing, I will inform you that this vessel belongs to the Colonies, and my intention is to use you as her pilot in my attacks upon this shore. You now understand what is expected of you, and will at once to duty."

As soon as the pilot had retired, Hezekiah received a motion from his commander, and together they entered the cabin. Here he was closely interrogated as to his adventures on shore. Careful as were his answers, he yet replied in such a manner as to lead his questioner to suppose that he had extended his walk further than the fisherman's cabin. Hand was not long in discovering this, and, being a man who detested falsehood, he made a clean breast of the whole matter.

"I thought you more careful than to allow your tongue to run away with your prudence," said the Captain, in displeasure. "Suppose this young lady should deceive you in the good opinion you have formed of her, and make the matter public?"

"She ain't going to do that, sir," quickly replied Hezekiah, "seeing as how she's friendly to Mr. Fletcher."

"How? Does she know him?" he demanded in astonishment.

"Sartin she does, sir. Knew him afore she moved to this country."

"Did you learn her name?"

"Axed her, but she wouldn't let on, sir."

"I wish she had," said the Captain, *sotto voce*. "What was her appearance?"

"I'll try and describe her, sir, though I swow if it won't be hard work, kase she was so oncommon pretty. She wasn't over large, but as plump as a berry. Her hair was almost black, and her eyes! Phew, I swow if it didn't go right through you like firelight, 'cepting it wasn't as snappish. She'd a kind of sad look, sir, as if she'd lost some friend, or'd been

cheated in love, or something of that sort, that make people long in the face. She'd a low, sweet voice, and if you'd heard her speak you'd know, sir, she wasn't the gal to blab a thing when she'd given her word of honor that she wouldn't."

"Did she seem anxious when you spoke of Mr. Fletcher?"

"I think she did a little more than common."

"You must not mention a word of this to any one, for I have a reason that Mr. Fletcher should be kept in ignorance that he has friends on shore. Now, Hand, I have a duty for you that carries much responsibility with it."

"Ay, ay, sir. That's jest what I like to hear you say."

"As soon as we stand for the harbor, you must go forward with the lead and take soundings. I suspect this fellow, this fish-catching friend of yours, and the very moment you find the water shoals, notify Mr. White of it. Be careful that the pilot does not see you."

"I'll tend to that, sir, never fear. Any other orders, sir?"

"None. You may go. If this event turns out as I imagine it will, Fletcher may derive some benefit from it," he mentally exclaimed, a moment after Hand had left. "Let me see. Oh, well, I will first attend to the work in hand before I lay out more. Perhaps," his voice was sad, "few, if any of us, may live to see the light of day twenty-four hours hence."

An hour longer the *Ranger* was allowed to continue her direct course. Her crew were chafing at what to them seemed useless delay, for all had some idea of what was meditated, when the deep voice of their leader called them at once to duty. The wind, in the mean time, had increased, and it was found necessary to ease her of part of her canvas. The instant this had been done the crew was divided, and while some repaired to quarters, others awaited the execution of the orders assigned them. The wind blowing fair, the ship was headed directly for the harbor, throwing the spray from her prow as if she disclaimed the briny element which bore her. Near the helm stood the pilot, his face exhibiting no trace of the hatred that burned within his heart. At his side stood the commander. His stern eye was fixed at times either upon the man he doubted, yet trusted, or would wander rapidly from his vessel to her crew. His manner was careless, yet not undecided, as he stood with his hand thrust within his

bosom ; none would have thought how sternly he would have meted out punishment, had the least sign of treachery been exhibited. Hand had succeeded in reaching his allotted place without attracting the attention even of the crew. He had already hove the lead, but desisted from further effort until a nearer approach to land.

"A man couldn't fetch bottom here without taking breath on his way down," he grumbled ; "and, if he did that, he wouldn't be likely to see a ship's deck agin. Derved if I don't believe I could take the *Ranger* in myself, under easy sail, without all this bother with that pilot. Let's try another heave, kase I ain't going to let the ship be beached without my telling about it a while afore. There you go, lump o' lead ; deeper than it was t'other time. Well, go ahead, I'll try agin afore long."

Whatever were the original intentions of the fisherman, they evidently were changed, for he brought the ship safely to the harbor's mouth. Suspicions had been aroused at several points, owing to the water becoming shallow, but as they would pass them, and the lead would show depth again, confidence in the man was somewhat restored. Hand, however, still seemed to have his doubts, and persisted that it was only by employing the threats that had been used toward him that had kept the pilot from sinking the ship. He kept his own counsel, however, and determined to watch more closely the man's future actions. The wind, instead of dying away, as all had hoped, blew with increased power, rendering the matter in hand one of doubt.

"Mr. Fletcher, you will see that orders are obeyed without a moment's hesitancy, else all our trouble will be for naught. This wind makes our success very uncertain," said the Captain, as they entered the bay.

"I hope we shall not be disappointed. The enemy seem to take no notice of us."

"I have no fear of that, for our disguise is perfect."

"Will you range along side and open fire?"

"No, sir. I shall endeavor to overlay her cable, and to fall upon her bow, so as to have all her decks open and exposed to our musketry. I shall at once secure him to me by grapplings, so that in case he cuts his cables, it will not

yield him any advantage. See that we fall away a little, Mr. Fletcher, as I desire a show of awkwardness in the movement, and have the men ready with the anchor."

Rapidly the *Ranger* neared her antagonist, who, although she noticed her, supposed her to be some merchantman. Every heart beat high, every weapon was grasped by a willing hand. The ship was handled in an awkward manner, that, when the movement for fouling was made, it would not be thought intentional, but attributed to the carelessness of her commander.

"Stand by to wear ship," came the order, in cautious tones. "Work lively, but work still."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Let her come up, Mr. Fletcher. Mainsail haul; brail up the spanker; head-yards a-box; square the after-yards; helm a-port."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"See to it, Mr. White, that you have no delay in letting go your anchor."

"I'm ready, sir."

"Starboard your helm—steady, so. Ready forward with your anchor—let go."

The order was heard, and willing, anxious hearts and hands sprung to obey it, but, owing to some unlooked-for accident, the anchor hung, and the *Ranger* dropped back from the position she was intended to have taken. Her commander stood waiting to feel her brought to; what was his chagrin when she rapidly fell back, and was at last checked full half a cable's length upon the enemy's quarter.

"What are you trying to do aboard that ship?" came the hoarse hail from his deck.

"The anchor hung, or you would not have asked that question," replied the *Ranger's* commander, adding, in a quick whisper: "Run forward, Mr. Fletcher, and cut the cable, or we may get a broadside."

"You haven't come to a stop yet, for your cable's parted," the voice again soon cried.

"Something's got into the ship to-night. She capers like a girl in her teens."

The distance between the two vessels had, by this time,

become so great as to forbid further conversation. The *Ranger* was allowed to drop still further in the gloom before her helm was used to bring her into subjection. The disappointment that the failure of the undertaking caused was intense. Many were in favor of boarding the *Drake*—for such was the vessel's name—in small boats, while others were for running her aboard and stand the consequences of an equal contest. To none of these proposals would the commander listen. None on board were more depressed by the failure than he. Still, not the least sign or action manifested his disappointment.

"Mr. Fletcher," he calmly ordered, "lay the vessel's course for a short stretch out of the loch. If wind and tide permit, I shall return and try the same thing. You can see now how doomed I am to disappointment, after using all the caution a man well could. Little did yonder fellow think what was the true character of the vessel he hailed. But he shall know ere long. Where is our pilot?"

"Forward, sir."

"Let him come aft."

It was some moments ere the Captain again spoke. The wind increased in violence, and the ocean began to toss its waters about them in huge waves.

"What think you of the night, pilot?" asked the commander, his powerful voice rising distinctly above the din of the elements.

"A rough one, sir, to say the least," came the answer, in equally distinct tones.

"Would it not be best to 'bout ship, and come to anchor within the harbor?"

"I shouldn't think of turning back now, sir."

"For what reason?"

"You'd be likely to stay weather-bound for some days, and I don't much think the company you'd have would be over friendly."

"A fig for the company! You say, however, that we would be obliged to remain for some days; *that* I most certainly object to. Know you of no better harbor hereabouts?"

"We'll get to sea first, sir, before we talk of making a port.

Yonder cliff looks more like the place that we'll reach than any other at present, if the wind blows any fresher."

"You think we are in danger?"

"We are, sir, yet with good seamanship we can perhaps work clear. I've brought you in here safe, and although you are an enemy to my country, and I'm made to do what's agin me, still I'll do the best I can for you. Ah!" he suddenly exclaimed, as a blast struck the vessel, heeling her over so that the water came bubbling up to her deck, "we're going to get the wind squally before long. There again! luff to and shake her—fill away and when you feel it coming, strike again," he ordered, addressing the man at the helm.

The perils that now threatened them banished at once all thought of returning to the *Drake*. It was evident that every arm would be needed in working the vessel from the dangers that surrounded her, until she reached the open sea. Although the Captain did not countermand the orders that the pilot uttered with the full assurance of a man who understood his business, yet he noted them, and ill would it have been did aught arise to awaken his suspicions regarding them. No other thought filled his breast save the one as to how his ship could be saved from wreck. No home, no fireside pictures mirrored themselves at that trying moment, upon his brain. He was calm, unflinching, and as his crew gazed upon his face as the light of the binnacle lamp would momentarily reveal it, they gathered courage, and strove with renewed will to battle against the mass of waters which constantly swept them from stem to stern.

"How much further, pilot, before we leave the danger astern?" he asked, breaking the silence which had reigned.

"Full two miles, sir."

"Think you the wind lulls any?"

"Not a whit, sir—we'll get it heavier when we weather this headland."

"That will be all the worse."

"I think not, sir, because we can head for the south shore of Scotland, and make a harbor under its lee."

"You know this coast, pilot, so take us where you will, only beware! You have been told the penalty, and your fate rests with yourself."

"I'm not the man to throw away my life for nothing, sir; so you can trust me. Besides I've a wife and little one that looks to me for bread, and I'd be a brute to run this ship aground, for the sake of drowning myself as well as you, and so leave them to starve."

The Captain remained silent, for the moments were too fraught with danger to be spent in conversation. He was impressed, however, with the fisherman's language, and felt that there would be nothing to fear that night, whatever he might be tempted to do at some future date.

Time seemed to drag slowly. The anxiety of the pilot increased rather than diminished, until the Captain noticed him start suddenly and gaze intently out into the darkness.

"How now," he asked; "see you a new danger?"

"Listen, sir! Don't you hear that dull booming noise at times?"

"I have not; but now you call my attention to it, I do. We are nearing the shore."

"Faster than I thought. Have the log hove, if you please, sir, for I want to see whether we will make the open sea, and miss the breakers on this course."

"Heave the log!" was the prompt command given Fletcher. The log was thrown.

"How fast do we move?"

"Six knots, sir."

"How does our speed suit you, pilot?"

"Not enough, sir. Board the main tack, if you please."

"She will scarcely bear it," remarked Fletcher.

"She *must*, sir!" replied the pilot, "or we are lost. Keep her a full and by," he added, turning to the helmsman.

"Ay, ay! she has it!" growled the man.

"Haul the main sheet aft, sir," he again ordered. "Helm a-lee when she goes into the sea."

"Ay, ay, sir—helm a-lee!"

"You'll be apt to start bolts, pilot," calmly remarked the commander, though his hand instinctively fell upon his pistol.

"They must stand, sir, or we won't live fifteen minutes. Right your helm! Have the log hove again, sir."

"Nine knots," came the desired information.

"Keep her away a little—steady, so!"

"Heave again!" shouted the Captain, anticipating the pilot's wish.

"Nine knots and a half, sir."

"We will do well, sir, if the ship holds together," remarked the man.

"You are trying the full strength of wood and iron, but the *Ranger* is strong and will bear it. Think you we are fully safe?"

"Not yet, sir. Get the luffs on the weather shrouds. Keep her a small helm, sir, and ease her in the sea."

The order was executed as quickly as possible; yet, not a moment too soon, for the immense strain of canvas parted several of the bolts before the luffs were on, and, although they relieved the chains and channels, still, anxious eyes were fixed upon those that still held out, for did they draw, death was inevitable. Thus onward plunged the ship as if anxious to find a watery grave, and make of herself a sailor's coffin. The white foam loomed out from the darkness like a shroud awaiting its dead. It dashed by her sides, or swept her decks in floods, yet held no victims in its folds. As had been predicted, the wind gathered force as they came round the point of the cliff. So narrow had been their escape, that the breakers seemed to lift the ship momentarily upon their foaming summits, as she swept, with lightning swiftness, by them. When once the open sea was gained, the ship's course was laid more toward the south and the canvas reduced. After a lapse of two wretchedly agonizing hours, they were anchored in comparatively smooth water, under the lee of the Scotch coast. During the night the wind lulled, although it still blew fresh. On the morrow, all hands set about repairing damages. In spite of the faithful services he had rendered, a close watch was set upon the actions of the pilot, fearful he would make his escape, and by the knowledge he possessed, arouse the entire country, thus to compel the *Ranger* to beat a hasty retreat from English shores before her commander had consummated the plans which had brought him thither. The precaution, however, was useless, for he showed no inclination to leave, whatever he might have felt. On the contrary, he mixed freely with the men, and worked with as much energy as Hezekiah himself. Toward the middle of the afternoon,

the commander summoned his officers, and to their astonishment, informed them that he had already concerted another plan, which he intended putting into instant execution.

"I have sent for you, gentlemen," he said, "to prepare another expedition which I hope will prove more successful than did our last, although I intend paying the *Drake* another visit. It is a fine, cold morning, and, as the three kingdoms are covered with snow as far as the eye can reach, it behooves us to create some excitement and *warmth* which will help thaw it."

"We are at your service, sir, and hold ourselves ready to obey your orders, whatever they may be," returned Fletcher.

"Well spoken, Mr. Fletcher. I feel myself honored in being seconded with so much ardor by my officers. What think you my purpose is?"

"Really, sir, I for one can not possibly conjecture. Perhaps some unfortunate vessel has obtruded herself upon your notice," replied the young man.

"If you had used the plural, your conjectures would have proven more correct."

"How, sir? Do you intend attacking the British fleet?"

"Not their naval force, whose sides show open ports, but as I said, this snow wants melting, and I think I shall lend my aid, by the heat produced by the burning of over two hundred sail."

"But, sir—do—" commenced his officer, his astonishment scarce allowing his utterance.

"Excuse me," interrupted his commander, "it seems at first a matter of impossibility—the very height of foolhardiness. But hear what I propose, and then you will see what chance I have for success. This plan suggested itself to my mind, owing to the strong affinity I have for the State of Virginia. Happy hours I have passed under its sunny skies, and I already love it, as if it were my native soil. I have calmly—yet only so because I have had no means of resenting the outrages—witnessed the depredations made upon its shores by the minions of England. My heart has ached for retaliation when the accounts of suffering have reached my ear, and I determined that as the torch had been the most destructive weapon used there, I should resort to the same expedient, and apply

it upon these shores, did the chance ever present itself. I think that opportunity is now within my reach, at least I shall attempt it. I am informed by reliable sources, that within the harbor of Whitehaven there are over two hundred vessels, principally of large size."

"You intend firing them, sir?" interrupted the second officer, White.

"Such is my determination."

"You will endanger the town."

"Endanger the town! What care I for *that*! Are they over careful in respect to fire, upon the shores of our own country?"

"Excuse me, sir, but I think it a rash undertaking; and nothing can be accomplished in burning poor people's property," replied the officer.

"Nothing can be *accomplished*," he repeated, an angry flush mounting his brow. "Do I understand, Mr. White, that nothing *can be got* in the way of gain? Am I to infer that you war on the principle of plunder, rather than for the cause? If so, sir, when next we see a friendly port, your presence would better grace the deck of some ship other than the one I command."

"I ask pardon sir, if I—"

"Silence! your apology is not asked." He then continued: "These vessels of which I speak lay some on the north and some on the south arm of the harbor, and while I make a descent upon those of the south, you, Mr. Fletcher, must attend to those of the north side. I choose the former, as there is a fort whose guns must be rendered useless before we apply the flame. Now, sir, what think you of the design?"

"I approve, and am at your service, for my part," replied Fletcher.

"Then see that the required articles are at once made ready, as no delay must attend our expedition when we reach the port."

"I will have all in readiness, sir."

"I desire Hand to be of my party."

"And the pilot?"

"Be placed under guard until our return. Now, sir, get under way at once, for there is no time to be lost."

Fletcher quickly issued the order, which was echoed by the boatswain's whistle. The men threw themselves, with a will, to their work, for the adventures they had so lately encountered only tended to increase their appetite for more. Soon the anchor was at "short stay," and sail was made. Care was taken not to brace the head-yards too sharp a-box, so that the ship should be canted with the least possible stern-way; the sooner the head-sails lifted or filled the better. Soon all was in readiness, and the jibs having been hoisted, the instant they "took" the ship began moving toward her destined port. The Captain left the deck in command of Fletcher, who stood on the taffrail; near him was the pilot. The young man, now that nothing demanded his attention, yielded himself a willing captive to the gloomy fancies which had become so habitual with him. He was at length aroused by the pilot.

"Where are we bound, sir?" he asked.

"Whitehaven," was the short reply.

"That isn't far from my home, and I should like to get back to it, sir, if you've done with me?"

"It is beyond my power to inform you how long you will be compelled to remain, although I am inclined to think it will be until we leave these shores once for all."

"If your Captain 'ud let me go, I would pledge my words, sir, not to say any thing about this ship or her crew."

"My superior, I don't think, would trust you, for our safety requires that we run no risks."

"My wife will take on 'bout my being gone so long, and is sure to go up to the mansion and alarm Mr. Somerset."

"Alarm who?" asked Fletcher, at once aroused at the mention of the name, and approaching nearer the man.

"Mr. *Somerset*, sir; do you know him?"

"I knew a man once who bore that name, but he lived in America."

"This Mr. Somerset has lived there."

"Indeed? How long since he came to England?"

"Better than four years, I think. You see, sir, he only left here to go there on a visit, and after being away for some time, he came back, bringing a young lady with him."

"What was her name?" asked the young man, endeavoring

to speak calmly, though he became more and more excited every moment.

"Miss Grace Maitland, sir; do you happen to know her too?"

"I have seen her, I think," replied Fletcher, carelessly, checking his feelings by a strong effort, as he realized that the man noticed his conduct. "Is she Mr. Somerset's adopted daughter?"

"Don't think she is, sir. He's only taking care of her till she marries."

"Ah! Then you are to have a marriage at the mansion, which will be quite a merry-making for you that live near."

"Yes, sir, we set our minds on being jolly, for Mr. Somerset and Miss Grace are very kind to all, both rich and poor."

"Do you know who her intended husband is?"

"He is an officer aboard the sloop-of-war *Drake*, and his name is Vaughn. You see," continued the man, loquaciously, seeing that his listener was much interested, "my wife was once lady's maid in the family; she goes up to the house a good deal, and does much light work for Miss Grace, and she has told her some of her troubles. Lieutenant Vaughn has been calling for some time, but she's put him off till a short while back; but now they're going really to marry as soon as he gets back from his cruise. My wife says if the truth were out that it would be sure to discover that Miss Grace had left her heart in America, even if she does give her hand to the Lieutenant."

"Does your wife think she is forced to marry against her will?" asked Fletcher, with some difficulty.

"No sir, she don't. Mr. Somerset's been very kind to the young lady since her father died out in America. Rose—that's my wife, sir—tells me how the poor thing cried all the next day after giving her consent. It may be all right, sir, with some people to make a lass marry the man they choose, but it ain't with me. It was her own free will, however, my wife says; Mr. Somerset said he'd like to have it so, and Miss Grace thinks he knows best, so she's willing to please him."

"I should like to see this young lady." He paused, but quickly continued, fearful that the man, who was quick-witted and more intelligent than the majority of his class,

would misconstrue the remark: "You remember I told you I had a slight acquaintance with this young lady, as well as with Mr. Somerset; and, though I am engaged in a cause that I am sure does not meet his approbation, still I do not think he would deny me entrance to his house."

"I wouldn't be over sure of that, seeing he has little love for rebels—I beg your pardon, sir—but so *he* calls you. If you'd like to send Miss Grace a bit of a note, I'll take it as soon as you put me ashore, and won't say how I come by it."

"Oh no!" exclaimed Fletcher, carelessly, "I won't put you to that trouble, as I suppose they have forgotten me by this time. I may see you again, however, on this subject," he added, as he turned away and walked further aft.

For a moment he stood with folded arms gazing vacantly at the blue sky above him. Had any lingering hope still clustered about his heart, it now vanished as the mist before the morning sun. How barren seemed the aims that men struggle to obtain in life! Oh, how his inmost heart longed for war, for bloody strife, for passion loosed from the restraint of reason, that would lead him where the blow of death was so freely given, if, perchance, it might be dealt to him! Grace Maitland the wife of another! How his brain grew dizzy as he pictured the delights he once thought were only for him, but now soon to be another's! To think of that fair head he had so oft felt reposing in confidence upon his bosom was to rest there no more! To think of those dark eyes within whose depths was mirrored his own likeness, now forever to be turned from him! What cared he for the "louder calls" that rung from out the brazen trumpet of ambition, provided Grace went hand in hand with him up the craggy path of time? He asked no higher station on earth than this—no greater inducements to make his lot blessed than her love. But it was denied—it was dead to him, and he too wished to die.

"I'll not think of it longer," he soliloquized, half aloud. Fate has it so, and all that I can do will not change it. Yet, it is hard to give her up, and to one so unworthy of her. I am confident some deception has been used, else she would not yield so willingly as she does. I can now see why this fellow, this Vaughn, so industriously tried to excite a quarrel with me, for then I stood in his way. Oh!" he exclaimed, as

the thought suggested itself, "so he is one of the *Drake's* officers, and we shall very likely meet before long! What if he should never return from his next cruise? I have the chance within my power to prevent it; but no; if he falls it must be by other hands than mine—I scorn to use undue advantage even against as bitter an enemy as he is to me."

His soliloquy was here interrupted by an order from his commander, who wished all arrangements perfected regarding the undertaking in hand, if they were not already done. This he at once attended to; and when completed, he went below, not for rest but for unquiet and painful repose.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "SASSY YANKEES." RAISE A FLAME.

It was nearly dark on the night of the second day after leaving the shores of Scotland before they arrived in the neighborhood of Whitehaven. The delay was partly owing to light winds, but mainly to a sail they had given chase to, which had escaped them on account of superior sailing. The object of their mission should have been attended to entirely regardless of all else, no matter how tempting the bait, but the desire to leave no opportunity unemployed in which to annoy and injure their enemy impelled the Captain to give way for a chase. As it was, instead of reaching the offing where they must leave the ship ere night should fall, it was well advanced into the night before all was made ready for the start into the harbor where the dangerous adventure was to be made.

"Push off, Mr. Fletcher, without further delay," ordered the Captain, as he sprung into his boat and gave the signal for his men to take their oars. "When you come abreast of the fort, wait until I signal you to proceed. Should I meet with more resistance than I expect, you will be apprised of it by the discharge of fire-arms, when you will at once hasten to my aid. Should all go smoothly, you will keep on to the *north* side of the harbor, and light a fire aboard the center and largest

vessel. Be cautious as regards silence, and see to it that your fire is not extinguished."

The young man replied in his customary prompt manner, and, with muffled oars, the boats started on their perilous undertaking. Reaching the entrance of the harbor, and in close proximity to where the first of the two forts was located, the Captain ordered the boats to cease rowing.

"My lads," he said, "I want a party of men to go with me, who are not afraid of meeting danger, perhaps death, or captivity. Who'll go?"

His entire party volunteered to a man, the foremost, however, being Hezekiah. Having made his selection, and giving orders to those who remained with the boats, they pulled for the beach. Here it required but a few moments to land, when Hand, together with his friend Bill, were sent forward to reconnoiter.

"Bill," exclaimed the Yankee, as they cautiously advanced, "I'm about as glad to be sent on this job as a gal is to get married. I *would* like to yell right out."

"Mayhaps you will yell before we get rid of the job," replied the mate.

"Not a chaw of tobacker do I care what danger comes of it. We're in for fun to-night, and I'm going to see the end, or the end will see me. Ain't it about time for them lubbers inside to give us a hail?"

"'Tis that, old fellow. Guess they've turned in, and t'other watch ain't turned out."

"How would it suit you, Bill, if we used the rat-tails, and spiked them ar' guns ourself, so that when we go back we can tell the Cap'n the job's done?"

"It ain't in the orders, is it?"

"No, and that's jest the reason I'd do it. Derved if we mightn't make heroes of ourselves now we've got the chance. What do you say, old tar-bucket?"

"Heave ahead, my hearty," replied Bill. "I'm with you to the death."

They had, by this time, reached the walls of the fort, where they halted for the purpose of listening and reconnoitering. No sound met their ears, save the faint splash of the water on the beach.

"Now, Bill, for a climb and a peep on t'other side," whispered Hezekiah. "Take to crawling, mate; down on your marrow-bones, and never mind your breeches. You might as well wear them out this way, seeing as how you won't with what praying you do, though you may wish you'd done a little more of it afore you see morning."

It required more time and exertion to reach the top than either could have supposed. They had to be careful not to detach any of the loose stones, the noise of whose fall might arrest the attention of the garrison.

"That's some climb," exclaimed the Yankee, as they seated themselves on the wall to recover breath. "I say, Bill, do you see any Britishers the way you're looking?"

"Not a rooster."

"What on 'arth's come of 'em all?"

"Don't think there's any about."

"Bet your life there is."

"Then what's 'come of 'em?"

"Shouldn't wonder but they're under cover, keeping warm, kase the night's sorter cool. Halloa! here's a gun. Give us a rat-tail, and I'll soon doctor his music."

The spike was placed in the vent, and laying a thick piece of leather on its head to deaden the sound of the blow, it was driven in to the head, thus rendering the gun at once useless. Encouraged by this success, they made the circuit of the fort, spiking every gun they met; nor did they stop until they were convinced that none remained which could be used. The thing that constantly suggested itself was, what had become of the sentinels. Although they might have dispensed with looking for them, still Hezekiah was not content till, to use his expression, he'd spiked *them*. After groping their way as best they could, they at last espied a light shining from a small but strong building situated in the extreme easterly angle of the construction.

"Say, Bill, yonder's a glim," whispered the Yankee, pointing to the light which his quick eye had detected.

"I see it, mate."

"Guess we'll find some of the cock-a-doodle-does inside."

"You ain't going to stir them up, be you?" asked his companion, as Hand started toward the barracks.

"That's jest exactly what's got into my head to do."

"You want to get your windpipe opened, I suppose. What do you think we two can do against the baker's dozen of sogers?"

"How do you know there's a baker's dozen? Come along, and let's find out how many there is, and then I'll see how we can make them fast alongside to feed the *Ranger's* calaboose."

They at length reached the door of the building, which was evidently the guard-house, and passed within the outer room. Seated around the fire of the inner room were some half a dozen soldiers, who were making the most of their watch by telling tales or indulging in idle gossip. The Yankee's eye was not long in discovering that they were without arms, and he bade Bill take a look for them, which was successfully done. The next thing was to examine the building's strength, and discover whether there was any other outlet save the door in front. Having satisfied themselves on this point, they next held a consultation, and soon hit upon a plan that was satisfactory. Finding that the door closed from the outside, and was fastened by a strong iron clasp, which would resist all efforts to force it open from the inside, they concluded to gratify their curiosity by listening to the conversation which was being carried on inside, before they sought the finale of their adventures.

"Well, lads," was the first words that reached their ears, "what do you suppose will be our next orders? That Colonel of ours isn't likely to let his regiment remain long in one place."

"You 'aven't 'eard 'em yet?" queried his companion, who, from his speech, was evidently an Englishman of the "first water."

"Not I; have you?"

"That 'av I, partly. Hit's said we're hup for 'Merica."

"That's the place, lads, to go to," chimed in a third. "It ain't hard fighting the rebels, they say, and there's plenty of booty to be had."

"How about beauty?" asked the first speaker. "One don't go well without the other."

"Hit's likely there's one where there's t'other," affirmed the Cockney.

"Shiver my liver," cried Hezekiah, excitedly. "It's more than I can stand, Bill, to hear them coveys talking 'bout our gals at hum in *that* way. I ain't going to listen to 'em no longer, kase I swow if I wouldn't lose my temper, and might do something foolish. Stand by to shut the door, for I'm jest going to say a word afore closing on 'em. Halloa, Mr. Sogermen," he said, raising his voice, "I've jest been list'ning to some of your talk, and it seems you ain't over careful what you say about people. Kinder 'stonished to see me, ain't yer? Guess you are by the way you look."

"Who are you?" demanded one of them, whom High saw was a Corporal by the distinguishing mark.

"Hezekiah Hand, from Maine, at your sarvice, Mr. Red-coat. That's me, Mister, and I've got about a dozen more boys outside, all from the same place, that I'll fotch in if you don't think it'd be 'truding on you."

"What business have you here?" demanded the Corporal, angrily.

"Guess I'll leave you to find *that* out afore long. I've been going the grand rounds, as you sogers call it; but, seeing nothing of you, I thought I'd step this way and see if you wasn't sick or froze to death, or, perhaps, like your guns outside, all spiked."

"I must take you prisoner."

"What's that?"

"You are my prisoner."

"Don't say so, do you? Why don't you come and take me?"

"You are not worth the trouble. If you attempt to stir, though, I'll put a bullet through you."

"Want to know if you would! Where on 'arth's the gun you're going to do it with? Oh, you've lost it or left it out doors, have you? There, never mind coming any closer this way," he quickly added, as the soldier made a movement as if about rushing at him, and presenting his pistol as he spoke. "It ain't no use getting riled 'bout it, kase it won't do you no good; so, if you'll jest keep quiet, I'll tell you something new. I'm one of them rebels you've been jabbering about, and one of the sort you'll find over the water, when you're looking for beauties and booty. I kinder thought some of you chaps

wanted to have a look at us, so I thought I'd save you a journey, and come over and see you. Folks told me at hum that it was uncommon hard work to make a landing on your shores, but I swow if it ain't easier than making a gal say yes. There, don't make a rush, kase this ar' thing's got a way of making a hole through a man. I'm going to shut out the air from you this mornin', kase I don't want you to ketch cold and die; you wouldn't be apt then to come over and see us. Stand by the door, Bill, for the sarpents are beginning to squirm uncommon lively, and they'll be for making a dart soon. Good-night to you, and when you come over don't forget to ask for Hezekiah Hand."

With these words he sprung rapidly back, and, seizing the door as his companion swung it shut, securely fastened it. It was not done a moment too soon. The soldiers had formed the impression, at first, that Hand was some escaped lunatic, and even after he had declared himself a rebel, the idea that he had succeeded in landing upon their coast, without attracting the attention of some vessel of war, was simply incredible. The suspicion that he really was what he represented himself to be, at length dawned upon their minds. This, with his tantalizing manner of speaking, awakened their ire, and the rush that was made gave him barely time to close and fasten the door. The two men now made their way to the boat, where fears for their safety were being entertained on account of their prolonged absence. After narrating their exploits, it was with the utmost difficulty that their commander could restrain the men from giving vent to their approbation by a lusty cheer. Little time was spent in reëmbarking, and again they were headed on their way toward the fleet of transports which were now to be fired.

The second fort lay more toward the south, and, at the distance of over a quarter of a mile from the first. Here they were again compelled to stop, until the task of rendering its guns useless was completed, which was done with much more ease, and in less time, owing to their being, in the first place, less in number, and also that the access to it was less difficult. Upon the ramparts no sentry kept his lonely watch. In fact, the idea that the forts were necessary to the immediate safety of the town was not entertained, consequently they were not

garrisoned. This will account for the loose discipline found existing among the Corporal's guard whom Hezekiah had so easily secured.

"Show the signal off the stern of the boat," ordered the Captain to Hand, as they again reëmbarked.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Does Mr. Fletcher answer?"

"Yes, sir; there it shines, off our quarter, sir."

"Give way then, lads, steady but strong, for, if I mistake not, the day is close upon us."

The men were as anxious to commence the work of destruction as their commander, and but a short time was allowed to pass before the outer end of the pier was reached. Here Hand was again sent forward, but returned with the information that the shipping seemed deserted, and that they were all high and dry upon the mud. This was very favorable, as they would be less likely to be extinguished by the efforts of the inhabitants of the town. No time was allowed to elapse before the men landed, and the combustible materials with which the boat was loaded passed on shore, to be conveyed to the vessel in which operations were to commence. The gray light of morning began to steal through the darkness before their work was completed. At length all was in readiness to apply the torch. But here again disappointment met them. By some unavoidable accident their light was extinguished, and, in spite of their most strenuous exertions, it could not be rekindled. For the moment, even their iron-willed commander despaired, but it was not long before his fertile brain devised means of overcoming the difficulty.

"Hand?" he called.

"Ay, ay; right here, sir," answered the seaman.

"I wish you to get me a light."

"I'll do that, sir, if you'll tell me where to go for it."

"It wouldn't be a hard matter to find one in the town—do you think so?"

"S'pose it would'nt, sir, unless they eat their vittles without cooking, or are too warm-blooded to ever feel the cold."

"There's little fear of that, so—away at once, and be back as soon as you can."

Our Yankee found no difficulty in reaching the town,

although he met several men already hastening to their day's work, too much occupied with their own affairs to pay much attention to the stranger. He at length reached a house whose door stood ajar. Pushing it still further open, he looked within, and to his satisfaction saw a bright fire burning on the hearth. He hesitated, as if undecided to enter boldly or knock for admittance. Bethinking that haste was required of him, and that it was near daybreak, he determined without further parley to enter. None were within save two females, evidently mother and daughter, who were so busily engaged in preparing the morning meal that he was not noticed.

"Good mornin'," he said, gruffly.

The younger raised her head at this unexpected greeting, and uttered a slight scream.

"There, don't go for to take on, Miss, if you never saw me afore," he said. "You needn't get skeered, kase I'm jest as harmless as a baby with the women."

"What do you want?" demanded the mother.

"Come to get a little fire, marm."

"What do you want with it?"

"We're going to tar ropes down at the shipping, and can't get a light."

"Oh, if that's all, you can take some, of course. Which will you have—a candle or some of the brands?"

"Guess I'll take a candle, marm, seeing you've a lantern that I s'pose you'll lend."

"You may have it, but return it soon. What part of the country did you come from? You are not an Englishman, I should say, from your speech?"

"Used to be one; but you see, marm, it's some time since I was here afore, and I've mixed so much with them derved rebels t'other side of the water, that I've got to be like one. S'pose you've heard of their capers?"

"Yes, some little."

"They're awful venturesome men at times. Derved if they ain't got brass enough to go into the house like I've come in here, and ask for a light, and then set fire to the roof over your head! They've got some rattlesnake, some bear and some wolf nater in them, marm, and, withal, they're *oncommon* sassy! Oh, they're an awful set of critters, sartin. But

"I'll be moving, so good-day, or early in the mornin' to you both."

He nodded his head, then turning, left the house, securing the lantern beneath the folds of his heavy jacket. The instant he arrived the men hastened to their respective stations, some to feed the fire, and others to guard against any attack that might be made; the torch was then applied. A barrel of tar was thrown upon the fire, and soon the dense smoke, illumed here and there by streaks of flame, issued from the vessel's hatchway. The instant the Captain saw the work of destruction had commenced, and that the fire could not be easily extinguished, he ordered part of his followers back to their boats. It was not long before the light of the burning ship aroused the half-awakened inhabitants, who now came rushing, in a tremendous crowd, toward the wharf. The picture that presented itself was of the most striking character. The bright light cast a ruddy glare upon the surroundings for some distance, making the gloom more apparent outside its circle. In the foreground stood the Captain, a pistol in each hand, while on his face rested a look of triumph. On either hand were the black sides of the shipping, while far overhead towered their tall masts—every spar, rope and block brought out in bold relief. At the end of the wharf crowded a clamorous throng, now surging this way, now that, but held in check from advancing nearer by the determined man who stood alone on guard, his party having been ordered to their boats. A quiet smile lit up his face as he glanced at the conflagration he had started, and which was progressing rapidly. At length, prudence warned him to tarry no longer, and he began slowly to retire backward to his boat. Pausing for a moment before entering, he glanced at his followers, then raised his cap. No word was spoken, but right well was he understood, for from those powerful lungs and sturdy frames burst one long, loud cheer, that woke the echoes of the distant hills, and rolled far out at sea.

The boats shot quickly from the shore and headed for the ship. Soon after the Captain's boat reached the *Ranger's* side, Fletcher's launch came alongside. The young officer had accomplished nothing. Their light, unfortunately, had been extinguished, to their great mortification, and although they

had made diligent search, success was denied them; they had no Hezekiah Hand to help them with his audacity and shrewdness.

"Notwithstanding my failure, yet something has been accomplished," remarked Fletcher, during the course of conversation that ensued.

"Absolutely nothing," replied his superior, "to what I expected, and yet something when we look at it in another light. Yonder fire that I kindled has been checked, by the faint light it shows, owing to my not being able to ignite more vessels than one; yet, Mr. Fletcher, this much we have accomplished: we have shown that, with all the boasted strength of England's navy, they can not protect their own shores; and the day may come when some of the scenes of distress which they have occasioned in America will be brought home to their own doors. Besides, we have brought along a few prisoners, as proof of what we have done, and as an evidence of what we may do at another time and place. Now, Mr. Fletcher, crowd on sail and for a visit to the *Drake*."

In obedience to his orders, as much canvas was spread as would draw, while the men were soon busily preparing the ship for the hard knocks which she must soon receive.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SEARCH FOR A TREASURE, AND THE DISCOVERY.

It was toward the close of the day when we again take a look at the inmates of Mr. Somerset's mansion. The young ladies are seated upon a ledge of rocks, which offered an excellent view of the ocean, gazing at the numerous fishing crafts that dotted its surface. The countenance of the elder was, if any thing, more sad in its expression than when we last saw her. The merry coquetry of her companion seemed to receive but little heed from Grace, until Kate, tiring of her renewed attempts to arouse in some small degree the buoyancy of spirits that Grace was wont to exhibit, ceased speaking,

and amused herself by throwing pebbles from the summit, to watch them as they bounded down the cliff from crag to crag. The attention of both was attracted, at last, to the movements of a vessel which seemed endeavoring to find a sure place to drop her anchor. At last the desired location was found. The craft was headed toward a small cove, partially concealed by a headland to the south, and, with her top-sail just lifting, she made a graceful swoop under her reduced sail up to the wind, and let go her ground tackling.

"What can that vessel want?" asked Kate. "How beautiful she looks, and how gracefully she came to."

"She is a noble ship," simply replied her companion.

"How matter of fact you speak," returned Kate, turning her head. "One would think you would fly in ecstasies at the mere mention of a vessel, when you will soon be a sailor's wife. Come, tell me honestly, do you not wish it was *his* vessel?"

"We should be glad to see him," replied Grace, carelessly, though a slight shiver ran through her frame, and her heart gave a sudden throb.

"We! 'pon my word, but I think 'we' can answer for ourselves! But I know you would be glad to see him. Look, Grace!" she added, quickly, "they are lowering a boat; and now, see, it comes this way! Who can it be?"

"It must be some friend of your father," suggested Grace.

"I know no friend of my father who would approach his house by this route."

"Perhaps he has just reached our shores, and has important business to communicate."

"We need not conjecture, since he will soon be here. See, there he comes, and he has chosen a path that would reflect credit upon a chamois-hunter to climb."

The stranger, who was none other than the Captain of the *Ranger*, had chosen, either from design or through ignorance, the most difficult means of ascent; and when at length he reached the top, he was obliged to make a short halt before proceeding further. As he arose from his resting-place, the young ladies attracted his notice. He quickly conjectured that one of them was her with whom he wished to speak. Approaching with an easy grace of manner that at once

bespoke him the accomplished gentleman, he slightly raised his cap and said:

"I should be pleased to know whether I am on the right path to the residence of Mr. Somerset."

"You are, sir," replied Kate; "are you wishing to see him?"

"No. The object I had in visiting his house was to meet Lieutenant Vaughn, who, I am informed, was spending a short time with him, prior to his rejoining his vessel."

This fact the Captain, it would appear, had learned from Hand, who had in his inquisitive way wormed from the pilot all manner of information, public and private, and had reported all to the Captain.

"I regret that you have arrived too late," returned Kate.

"Ah! Has he left?"

"Yes, sir. He sailed some days ago."

"I am sorry, for it will be impossible to say when I shall again have the opportunity of being in such agreeable society," he added, bowing gallantly.

"Should your business be urgent, sir, you will find him at present within the harbor of Carrickfergus, where his vessel is to remain a short time," returned Kate, blushing slightly at the implied compliment, and inwardly setting down their visitor as a very agreeable man.

"I shall see him then, without doubt," answered the Captain, with undeniable truth. "You have no message for him? I shall at once repair on board the vessel and should feel honored in conveying any message you may intrust me with."

"You must not think of returning until to-morrow at the shortest. My father would censure me for allowing a friend of Lieutenant Vaughn's to approach within sight of his house, and not prevail on him to enter."

"I thank you, and accept your offer as freely as it is given. You, then, are Mr. Somerset's daughter?"

"Yes, sir."

"I beg your pardon, but is this your sister?"

"No, sir. This is a dear friend of mine, whom I love as a sister, however. Miss Maitland, allow me to introduce you to—?"

"Captain Roberts," he added, bowing, and at the same time gazing intently upon the countenance of the fair girl.

"Maitland! I should know that name. Have you friends living in America?"

"None, sir," she replied, starting abruptly at the question.

"I am mistaken then."

"There are several families bearing that name there other than our own," she said.

"I know; but you really resemble those I refer to. We will speak further of this to-night, if you have no objection, and the time can be spared; shall we walk toward the house?"

"The very thing I was about proposing," said Kate; then, turning to her companion, she added: "Do you, Grace, pilot Captain Roberts, while I hasten on to inform father," and with this she tripped lightly away.

"You evidently are fond of gazing out upon the ever-moving waters of the ocean, I should say, Miss Maitland, if this well-worn foot-path speaks the truth," he remarked, as they walked slowly on. "For myself, I am an enthusiast on the subject. There is a secret something between the waves and your own soul, that gives the latter a buoyant, hopeful feeling, imparted to it nowhere else. I tell you honestly, that I love its howling tempest and its foam-wreathed swells, better than the sun-lit fields or the green leaves of land. But if you fancy me a rhapsodist, I know not what you would say did you hear the eloquence employed by a young friend of mine—whom I have not seen for some time—named Fletcher, who—"

"Fletcher! Did you call him Fletcher?" she asked, interrupting him.

"Yes, Miss Maitland, Ernest Fletcher."

He turned away his head to conceal the pleasure her manner afforded him. He had at last learned the young man's secret. He read like a revelation the secret of his sorrows—why he had striven to "suffer and be strong." The Captain continued, after a moment:

"His history is very interesting—one of those romances which make us both sad and glad to hear—perhaps you would not find it wearisome to listen to it. I saw him but a short time ago in Paris. He was much changed. For the man of buoyancy in spirit, and strength in hope, he was immeasurably cast down, sick of life, indifferent to the future. His case was one to create uneasiness in any heart which could read his

own." He paused as if with a troubled thought, but really to read the effect of his words upon the heart of his listener.

It was a moment of exquisite pain to the poor girl. In that sad picture was presented her once happy lover—had *she* wrought the change? Her face grew pallid as snow, and her frame trembled violently. Staggering to a seat under the shade of a great oak, she burst into tears.

"Young lady, you astound me! Have I so wounded your feelings as to cause you anguish? Pray, relieve me from my anxiety," he continued, as Grace made no answer.

With a strong effort she recovered her composure. "No, sir, you have done no wrong, but have stirred in my heart very, *very* distressing memories. It was *I* who drove him away, who banished his peace, who have made him seek danger that he may die—I, sir!" She arose and confronted the Captain, as she uttered this. Her whole demeanor proved the pain, not the pleasure, which the thought gave her.

"You surprise me more and more, young woman. I pray Heaven you have had good reason for so doing, for if you have not, your sin is, indeed, great; a very noble man's happiness has been forever wrecked, let the cause be what it may."

"Oh, my dear sir, pity me—help me. I am so torn between my sense of duty and the love I bear for Fletcher, that death would indeed be a relief."

"Then you do love him?"

"I love him tenderly and truly."

"Is it possible? Then why all this misery—why are you not happy in his love?"

"Alas! I can only confess that circumstances have seemingly controlled our destinies. It is a painful revelation for me to make, but, sir, you have a right to know it all. Indeed, I could wish you to hear it, to learn if what I have done be, indeed, so wrong as you insinuate."

"I shall only be too glad to hear your story. It may be spoken in confidence. I am a man of more importance than my appearance suggests; but be very considerate. Act as if nothing had occurred, and treat me simply as Mr. Roberts until you know me as another. Let us hasten, now, to the mansion, where we must be expected, and to-night let us seek

an opportunity to finish our conversation. Good may come of our chance meeting ; so cheer up and show no signs of your recent pain."

Grace's face really lit up with something of its old radiance. Like the echo of some far-off bell, there vibrated through her soul a monotone of indescribable sweetness—a proof that the bell still was there, though far away ; did there not also come out of the darkness a hope that the bell might some day ring in her old happiness again ? We can not say ; but may guess that it was so if her lightened step and happy face

" Told the tale that her tongue
Was too timid to speak."

The reception at the mansion was hospitable and without reserve. Captain Roberts was soon made to feel "at home ;" nor did Mr. Somerset at any time detect the subtle art by which his guest forebore to converse upon the topic of the war. The desire to be gallant to the ladies was, apparently, the stranger's greatest pleasure, and after tea he was permitted to have his own way, which, it may be confessed, was a fascinating one.

As if by accident, Grace and himself strolled away over the lawn to the heights overlooking the sea, and there found the quiet spot where they might converse with freedom.

Grace at once became excited, and was again in tears even before her recital was commenced ; but the Captain, with real feeling and much tact, calmed her mind, and soon she was telling her whole story without reserve—keeping back nothing, palliating nothing. After her revelation was ended, the guest sat some time in silence, as if weighing all, with a desire to advise rightly.

At length he said, as if speaking to himself, "Wrong—all wrong !" He continued, addressing his words to the young lady :

"You discarded Ernest Fletcher because he has chosen, in this war, to battle for principle and justice. My dear Miss Maitland, you are no doubt sincere in your belief that you have pursued the right course in following Mr. Somerset's advice, but I assure you, you are doing both yourself and Fletcher a life injury."

"I believe I have ; but, alas, it is now too late to repair the error. We are lost to each other forever."

"Not if I can aid you. Miss Maitland, can I trust you?" he demanded, his voice growing stern.

"You may, sir, freely," answered Grace, meeting the penetrating glance of his dark-blue eye.

"Listen, then, but curb your astonishment. My name is not Roberts, nor had I other business in visiting this house than in seeing you. On board of yonder ship Mr. Fletcher now is, although, believe me, Miss Maitland, he is entirely ignorant of my visit to you, or, indeed, that you reside here. *I am one of those detested rebels, and my vessel is an American man-of-war!* What has caused me to visit this coast, or what I have accomplished since my arrival, you will know ere many days. Neither Mr. Fletcher nor myself are 'pirates,' 'villains,' but gentlemen, and officers of the navy of the United States. As such are as respected by all the powers of Europe except by the detested court of the tyrant who rules this people, and would rule America."

"May I presume to ask what then is your proper name?"

"You have promised secrecy. Are you *sure* you will not deceive the confidence reposed in you?"

"You may trust me, sir. What you confide to me shall be as sacred as my own unuttered secrets."

"Miss Maitland, I am *John Paul Jones!*" he said, proudly.

Grace gazed upon her guest as one in a maze of bewilderment and astonishment. Often had she heard of astounding exploits planned and executed under his guidance. She had, indeed, been taught to regard him as a monster. Now her eyes beheld the truth! Before her sat not a monster, but a man—a kind, noble-hearted, disinterested man—one who had entered into peril at that very moment to befriend her and her much-injured lover.

"You seem astonished, Miss Maitland," he remarked, while a pleasing smile passed over his face; "perhaps you are disappointed in the opinion you had formed of me?"

"Really, sir, I know not what to say. Little did I guess with whom I was conversing."

"Let your astonishment cease, and once more to the subject in hand. I am purposing to attack the *Drake*. If the

fortunes of war smile on me, Lieutenant Vaughn will be placed where you will have no more trouble with *him* for some time. But, my dear young lady, let it be fully understood by me : would you wish to see Fletcher again ?”

For a moment she hesitated, and then frankly replied : “I would.”

“And would still be willing to become his wife ? Answer boldly and truthfully.”

Her answer was almost inaudible : it seemed to come from her divine self rather than from herself in flesh and blood :

“*I will become his wife !*”

“Then it shall be so, provided we are victorious in the coming contest, and our lives are spared. Let us now return, for our absence may excite remark.”

When near the mansion, Grace detained the officer ; laying her hand lightly upon his arm, she said :

“You must think I have little strength of character ?”

“I do not fully understand you,” was the reply.

“My meaning is this : I first yielded to the wishes of Mr. Somerset, and now I submit to yours.”

“I see nothing in this that would lead me to believe you deficient in resolution. That you listened to your protector, and was willing to take the step he proposed, is no marvel. You have simply thought with the mass, that we men of America were little better than criminals, and so thinking, doubtless preferred to sever all association with them. That was prudent if not just. A woman often yields to her pride when her heart protests against every step she takes. It were far better, I believe, to follow the dictates of our nobler impulses than to listen to the claims of the politic and worldly wise, whose chief philosophy is underscored with selfishness. One word more : let the service I have rendered you be told to none excepting those who will receive benefits resulting from it. Should you hear my name spoken of, let it not be known that you have ever seen me, much less contradict any assertion that you know to be false. Let me be outwardly whatever your country chooses to call me ; but in your heart, Miss Maitland, let me abide as a man, who, though his life has been a stormy one, and his actions seemingly cruel, still, as one who would dispel the clouds that have gathered over your

life's morning. You, at least, may look back and bless the man who met you on this rocky shore."

Grace caught his hand and pressed it to her lips. The act was instinctive. "God bless you!" was the Captain's half-whispered response.

CHAPTER X.

THE RANGER AND THE DRAKE IN THE DEATH STRUGGLE.

EARLY the following morning found the Captain on board his vessel. Much as the curiosity of Fletcher was aroused to discover the purport of that visit on shore, still the manner of his superior held his curiosity in abeyance. All damages had been repaired and the ship only awaited the command to move upon her antagonist. News of their late exploit had, by this time, spread through the length and breadth of the land; prudence, therefore, warned them that their stay upon that coast must not be prolonged. At last came the order to up anchor. Cheerful voices quickly replied; soon all was activity. The sails, one after another, were spread to the morning breeze, and, as they filled, the vessel, slowly at first, began to move round the point of the little headland. The men were informed of the work before them, receiving the news with evident satisfaction. Thus time passed until the frowning highlands of the Scotch coast loomed to view. The entrance to the harbor of Carrickfergus was at length reached, and the *Ranger*, decked in her usual disguise, stood boldly in.

"Our friend seems inclined to come out, Mr. Fletcher!" was the Captain's salutation, as he lowered his glass, through which he had been watching the movements of his enemy for some time.

"He is certainly making preparations to do so," replied the young man.

"He has lowered the boat," he again remarked; "it is standing this way."

"More than likely to reconnoiter the *Ranger*."

"You are right, sir, and it would gratify me could we entice these fellows on board. I shall try whether it can be done;" then raising his voice he ordered: "Stand by to wear ship!" He paused until the men had reached their places.

"Up mainsail and in spanker—helm a-port! Let go the bowlines—after-braces round in! Brace in, Mr. Fletcher, as her head pays off; keep the main just lifting."

As soon as the wind came aft, the fore-tack was raised and the head-yards squared. Then, as the ship came to the wind, the after-yards were braced forward, the spanker hauled out, the mainsail set, and the head-sheets hauled off. Thus the vessel was placed so that naught was presented to the approaching boat but her stern. It was feared that by changing their course, the reconnoitering party would gather suspicion as to who they were, and return to their vessel. For a single moment, this they seemed inclined to do; but after using a glass—which the *Ranger's* Captain saw they possessed—they seemed satisfied that the movement amounted to nothing, for they came swiftly on.

"I really believe, Mr. Fletcher, those fellows will board us."

"They seem so inclined, unless they discover us," replied the young man.

"That they will scarcely do, if we can keep the ship's stern to them."

"If he reaches our deck entirely innocent as to our character, his chagrin will be amusing to behold."

"And his surprise as great to see a merchantman transformed into a man-of-war. But he has come up rapidly! Listen to his hail!"

"Ship ahoy!" came a voice from the boat.

"Ahoy!" was the answer.

"Who are you?"

"British ship Mary."

"What are you standing off and on the mouth of this harbor for?"

"For the simple fact that we don't know the way to get in."

"If that's all, I will act as your pilot."

"Who are you—I won't trust my vessel in the hands of a man I don't know?"

"I am an officer belonging to the sloop-of-war *Drake*. We took you to be the pirate that made a descent upon Whitehaven a few days ago."

"We're an honest craft, sir; and if you will come on board we shall be glad to have you show us a safe anchorage."

The boat was soon alongside, and the officer and his crew speedily climbed the *Ranger's* decks. Upon reaching them, their eyes soon encountered the engines of war that lined her bulwarks, and the hardy-looking crew that gathered about them. Apparently their suspicions were aroused, for they made a motion to reach their boat, but retreat was cut off, for Hand, backed by a dozen shipmates, stood in their way.

"Call you this a harmless vessel?" demanded the Englishman, foaming with rage. "I am a British officer, and demand to know what this treatment means?"

"You shall be informed, most certainly," replied the Captain, smiling. "I do most heartily call my vessel and crew 'honest' in the cause of American liberty, and, as to the treatment you complain about, it shall be such as is usually yielded to *prisoners of war*!"

"You will speak less vauntingly ere many hours," returned the officer, with a sneer. "Yonder vessel will not be long in bringing you into subjection, unless you carry as good a pair of heels as cowards generally do."

"It is well that you are a prisoner, otherwise the words you utter might jeopardize your life," answered the Captain, sternly. "I have come here for the *purpose* of encountering your vessel, and not a rag shall be given to the breeze to avoid her. Think you, young man, that these guns will not send their iron compliments equally as well as those on board of yonder royal smack, or that the hardy men about us are not able to manage them? The struggle that will soon take place shall be one in which the mettle of British subjects shall be tested by American freemen." Then, turning to his next in command, he ordered: "Have those men conveyed below; and you, sir," turning to the officer, "accompany me to my cabin."

The course of the boat had evidently been watched with much anxiety as well as excitement. It had scarcely reached the *Ranger*, and was being towed at her stern, when some five

small vessels, manned by the inhabitants of the town, who were curious to see the engagement that would take place, did the *Ranger* prove to be the ship they suspected, became frightened, and wisely put back. Alarm smokes now appeared in great numbers, on both sides of the channel, and the sloop-of-war made all the haste she could against the unfavorable tide to reach the open sea. The *Ranger's* disguise was now taken off, and, with her crew at their quarters, her courses up, and her main-top-sail to the mast, she waited for her enemy. The *Drake* at length succeeded in weathering the point, and was allowed to proceed to about mid-channel, before the *Ranger* headed for her. As the two ships neared each other, the cross of St. George was run up the Englishman's peak, to be answered by the Stars and Stripes of the Continental ship. The commander of the *Ranger*, supposing that preface was at an end, was on the point of opening fire, when he was unexpectedly hailed :

"What ship are you?"

"The American Continental ship *Ranger*. I have patiently waited for you, and, as it's hard on night, I am in some haste to begin," was the reply. Then turning to Fletcher, he added: "Put your helm up, and round to; we will try and send our compliments first."

The *Drake* being astern of the *Ranger*, the latter rapidly fell away, and, as she gained position, the word was passed. Forth from her side belched fire and smoke, while the thunder of the report heralded the onset. Her antagonist staggered under the iron storm that struck her sides; many a startling cry told that death and destruction had followed. She soon recovered, however, and, forging ahead, opened back her answer. Gun answered gun. Both vessels being equally well armed, the contest promised to be stubborn. The neat appearance of the deck soon vanished. Here and there could be seen the deep, dark stain of human gore, or the splintered fragments of the bulwarks or spars. Men who, but a short time before, wore cheerful faces, now flitted from place to place, with powder-stained visages, made doubly repulsive by the look of passion impressed upon them. More like devils let loose, and commissioned by their satanic master to the work of death, fought the crew of both; they seemed to revel

in the awful sport, and make a pastime of sending forth upon the unfathomed sea of eternity the souls of their fellows. Ever foremost could be seen the tall, sinewy form of Hand, whose strength seemed that of a giant. His favorite gun spoke the most rapidly; every shot went crashing into the enemy's sides or upper works—not one went astray.

"Now for her main! Our last ball cut away her fore-top-sail yard. Blast it, boys, work her lively, and let's get up a sweat; I'd just like to be as hot now as making hay in summer-time. Jewolopers! I did it! In with her, and down her throat with another pill."

With such expressions, even in these awful moments, would this dauntless man urge on his companions to renewed exertions; and, though many a ball struck near him, he yet remained unhurt. During the early part of the contest the vessels had remained apart, and the battle had been at long range. Both commanders seemed at length to tire of this, and, as if the thought had been mutual, commenced working the vessels nearer. As they approached, Hand received an order from his superior, which he, in turn, communicated to the crew, and then set about executing it. Unlashing his gun, he moved it to the stern of the ship, where, placing it to command the entire space forward of the mainmast, he loaded it to the muzzle with rifle-balls, bits of broken metal, and such like missiles. This done, the gun was then hidden by the plentitude of materials at hand. Having accomplished this, Hezekiah seized a musket from a wounded topman, and assumed the duties of a sharp-shooter. The vessels at length met. Scarcely had they done so, when the loud command of "Boarders away!" came from the English craft, followed on the instant by the echoing cry of "Repel boarders!" from on board the American. Now came the crowning horrors of a battle at sea. No friendly covert—no line of breastworks presented themselves to which the exhausted warrior could retire for rest and shelter. It was man to man, steel to steel, death or surrender.

The Captain was ever foremost in the fray. His voice cheered on the men, and brought them back when any partial success or overwhelming mass of the enemy gave them a momentary superiority. This hand-to-hand contest was his

favorite termination to a sea engagement, and at such moments his bearing was dauntless in an astonishing degree. Foremost, too, was Fletcher. He seemed to hear none of the fearful sounds, to see none of the revolting sights which surrounded him, but struggled on, evidently courting death with every blow. The fight was raging at its height, when the shrill pipe of a whistle sounded high above the din of battle. To the crew of the *Drake* it was not comprehensible; that such a sound should be heard at that time, caused them to pause for a moment and gaze at each other in expectancy. Not so, however, with their antagonist; for scarcely had it ceased when, to a man, they broke the determined front they had so obstinately presented and maintained, and rushed aft. A cheer of victory swelled from their foe, at what to them was considered an acknowledgment of defeat on the part of the Americans, but it was quickly hushed, as they saw the frowning muzzle of the gun pointed directly toward them, and the sturdy figure of Hand standing ready to apply the match. The truth at once burst upon them. Quickly turning, they sought to gain their own decks. A signal was made; the port-fire was extended; forth leaped the flame, and the iron hail swept the decks. The next moment, as the smoke cleared, a mass of dead and dying men were revealed, stretched upon the fore-castle. No time was given them to recover from the confusion in which they were thrown. Heading his crew, the Captain dashed over his vessel's side, and reached the deck of his foe almost without opposition. Here, however, the fight was resumed, only with less numbers for the *Ranger's* men to contend with.

It was during one of these shifting scenes of that strife, and when Fletcher had become partially separated from the mass of his men, that he suddenly found himself face to face with Vaughn. Both simultaneously dropped their weapons.

"Henry Vaughn!"

"Ernest Fletcher!"

"Again we meet!"

"And as we should," retorted the Lieutenant, "with swords in our hands, and the hatred of foes within our hearts."

"Let it apply to yourself, not me," replied Fletcher. "Pass on, Henry Vaughn, I have no wish to cross weapons with you."

"You have no wish! You should better say you have no desire to meet the death at my hands which you so richly merit. Take your guard, traitor!"

"I will not; but think not 'tis from cowardice. There is a higher motive that restrains my arm."

"Grace Maitland—ah! does that name startle you? She will bless me doubly on our wedding-day when I tell her that it was *my* good sword that ended your vile life."

"Liar and fool!" The words came thick with rage. "Double liar, she will *curse* you for the act, were you but man enough to fulfill your boast! Protect yourself, for you have at last made me your deadly foe."

Quick as lightning did their swords cross. Fast as a passing thought did they give and guard blows. Both were in the prime of life, equally strong and active; neither was a novice in the use of his weapon. So fiercely did they fight, that the combatants on either side checked their own eagerness to take life, in order to witness that dreadful personal combat. Anger lent them superhuman aid, and their strength seemed as fresh as at the commencement of the contest. The arm of Vaughn at length gave signs of weariness. His sword's point was held lower, and his thrusts grew weaker. Fletcher was not long in detecting this; he at once determined to disarm and make the Briton a prisoner. Watching his opportunity, he seized an unguarded moment; then, making a feint as if to cut at the head, he threw his blade over, with the point under that of his foe, wrenching it from his grasp with such violence that it flew over the sloop's side and fell into the sea. At that instant a sudden rush from behind impelled Vaughn forward. Our hero endeavored to withdraw his weapon but it was too late. His antagonist was fairly borne upon its point until it entered deep into his breast. A slight shiver convulsed the officer's frame; then, with a deep groan, he fell upon the deck. Fletcher was upon the point of conveying his fallen antagonist to a place of safety, where his wound could receive instant attention, when he felt himself caught rudely by the arm and dragged back. Turning as best he could, he saw Hand draw a pistol from his belt and fire.

"I've saved you, sir, from having your boots took off for

the last time!" the Yankee exclaimed, wiping his powder-stained visage. "I don't know who it were, sir, that was taking such uncommon good aim at you, but he's lying yonder, where he won't move till some one does it for him."

The young man's reply was arrested by a cheer which arose, and which was fairly deafening. Glancing around he understood the cause: the *Drake* had surrendered!

As soon as the first excitement had subsided, Fletcher hastened to the spot where Vaughn lay, and, to his joy, found that he still breathed. He had him removed as tenderly as possible; and, although his wound was critical, the surgeon held out hope that he might recover. Curiosity now prompted him to ascertain who it was that Hand had shot, and, to his astonishment, found that it was the Commander of the *Drake*. The reason why he had met his death at the hand of Hezekiah was, that he had been a witness to the contest between his Lieutenant and Fletcher, and, as the former fell, he determined to at once avenge his death. The quick eye of the Yankee caught sight of the leveled pistol, and, but for the sudden grasp laid upon the young man, he would have added one more to the number of the already dead.

The weather on the succeeding day was unusually fine. The crew of the *Ranger* were busy repairing damages. Little comparative hurt had been sustained by their own ship, and, ere long, she was ready for further service. But the *Drake* had not come off so fortunately. Her hull was badly shattered; every mast and yard were touched; her sails were shot to ribbons, and her rigging hung in shreds. Her fore and main-top-sail yards were down on the lup; the top-gallant yard and mizzen gaff hung along her mast; her jib also hung in the water, and the second ensign, as if mourning over the defeat, drooped from the quarter gallery. Again the *Ranger*, followed by her prize, went bounding over the waters of the boundless deep. Before leaving the scene of the late contest, the pilot was called aft, and addressed by the Captain:

"My man," he said, "the moment of your release has arrived. It is true you were brought on board this vessel by force, but I think you will find that your stay has not been without profit. We at one time doubted you, and your every

action was watched ; still you did your duty and did it faithfully. Whether you would have given us into the hands of your countrymen or not, I can not positively assert, but I am rather inclined to think you would. However, be that as it may, you have done us all the service we required. Take this purse. You will find in it an ample recompense, more than was promised you. But now I would ask you to do me a favor—if you can do it willingly ?”

“ I’d be glad to, sir ; and hang me, sir, now the time’s come for me to go ashore, if I hadn’t about as lieve stay,” he replied, honestly.

“ I am glad to learn that you bear so good a feeling toward me ; but you had better return to your wife and child. The favor I ask of you is this : take this parcel, and as soon as you can deliver it to Miss Maitland *in person*, do so. But be very careful that no one observes you when you give it to her. Good-by, my man ; should we again meet, I hope it will be when peace and good-will are restored between your nation and the free and independent States of America.”

The hardy fisherman grasped the proffered hand, and pressed it warmly. Then, drawing the sleeve of his coarse coat across his eyes, he turned and entered the boat. Ere long, he was seen for the last time, well advanced on his way to the shore.

“ Did I consult my own wishes, I should tarry, but there are many things to draw me hence. I have now a matter of importance—at least such it is to you—of which I desire to speak.” This was addressed to Mr. Fletcher, as he came aft for orders.

“ You surprise me, sir—pray what is it ?”

We need not detail the conversation that ensued. The interview between Captain Jones and Miss Maitland was clearly and unreservedly discussed. The Captain then adverted to the plan he had in view, and the manner in which he hoped again to unite the young people. Fletcher listened with intensified interest ; the wild, sweet hopes of the past once more swept over his perturbed soul. Would happiness once more be his ?

When his superior had finished his story and expressed his purposes, Fletcher essayed to speak his gratitude ; but he was

at once checked. That strange man could not bear praise of this kind. He had done that which his heart approved ; and never, in all his multiplied experiences, did he permit any thanks to qualify his own satisfaction at a disinterested service.

It was now determined to head directly for Brest, as the alarm had spread far and wide. Many an armed cruiser was dispatched to find and punish the daring "*pirate*" who had so terrified English hearts and invaded the sanctity of English soil. Jones, had he obeyed the longings of his own heart, would gladly have encountered those many dangers ; but it was more prudent that he should return to France, in order to cover his further designs from observation. When next his vessel's prow headed for the sunny slopes of England's coast, he shrewdly counted upon less watchfulness than was manifested immediately after his first dash to the North.

The *Ranger* attempted the passage south by the south channel, but the wind making an unfavorable shift, she was taken northward, and so down the west coast of Ireland. Three days later, anchor was safely dropped in the harbor of Brest.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD AND THE NEW.

STRETCHED upon his couch of pain within the city of Paris, where he had been conveyed by the thoughtful care of Fletcher—who had provided the best of medical assistance—lay the wounded officer, Vaughn. Many days had passed unconsciously to him. Reason had forsaken its throne, and only the wreck of a man lay tossing upon that couch of pain. At length suffering, like time, passed away, and Vaughn woke to consciousness with scarcely strength enough to speak his wishes. The soothing hand of woman was about his pillow ; her charming presence filled the room as with a vivifying and ennobling atmosphere. The invalid was happy in his convalescence.

The parcel which had been intrusted to the fisherman informed Grace of what had transpired. The fair girl first threw herself before the presence of the Heavenly Father who had preserved her first and only love amid the awful carnage of battle; then she hastened to inform Kate of what had befallen the officer Vaughn. Her companion received the news with an emotion too objective and apparent for disguise. In that moment she betrayed the secret of her heart. Nor was Grace surprised at the quickly-formed resolution of Kate to proceed at once to Paris. Grace offered at once to be her companion. Mr. Somerset having provided them a suitable and trusty escort, hastened their departure, anxious that Vaughn should receive all the care which money and friends could bestow. He deemed the mission an act of patriotism, as well as of duty to one whom he felt to be a member of his family. Little did he realize the *dénouement* that was in store for him.

When the officer first opened his eyes to the light of returning reason, it was to encounter Kate's fair young face bending anxiously over him. When he again sunk into that dreamy mood—the result of weakness—his ear would catch the words that fell from her lips; the truth dawned upon him that she loved him with more than a friend's affection. He mentally reviewed the past; he realized the present; he conjectured the probabilities of the future in an alliance with her to whom he was affianced, but whom he only too well knew did not love him. He was painfully impressed with a conviction that his pursuit of Grace did not proceed from a manly motive. Her evident coldness had aroused the determination of a will which had seldom known what it was to be thwarted, while her peerless beauty he fancied would well grace his ancestral home. But love, sweet love, was not there. Oh, how dark the void seemed when, with unfettered reason and an invalid's justice, he beheld what must come of a wedded life where only pride and circumstance sat at the board! Love, sweet love; how his feverish soul longed for it! Vaughn the old had perished on that sick bed, and Vaughn the new was resurrected.

The young ladies were seated within a chamber leading

from the sick room, on a beautiful afternoon, when the following conversation ensued :

"The wedding will take place as soon as the Lieutenant recovers, I suppose?" queried Kate, endeavoring to speak in a cheerful manner, although the effort was a sad failure.

"I know not," was the brief reply.

"You seem indifferent, Grace, and I am tempted to believe that you are quite indifferent as to whether you ever marry at all."

"I certainly am not anxious to relinquish my freedom and to bury my ancestral name under the monument of another's glory!" was her decided reply.

Her companion sighed.

"Kate!"

"Well, Grace, what is it?"

"Why do you sigh?"

"'Tis nothing but a thought."

"I can read that thought."

"You?"

"Yes, Kate, my friend—my sister—I can. You love Lieutenant Vaughn!"

"What, I? I love your intended husband!" she indignantly exclaimed. "Oh, Grace, I did not expect this of you!" and the look of distress which passed over the features of the young girl was painful to behold.

"Calm yourself, my dear Kate, and listen: suppose he was *not* my intended husband—what then? How would the matter then stand?"

Her friend's face flushed with sudden emotion, but she made no reply.

"I have a secret to tell you," commenced her companion, speaking low. "I intend to have him release me from our engagement—there, do not speak, but hear me through. I have lately heard more than you imagine about Ernest Fletcher; and *his* wife, and his only, will I be. I was rash, nay wicked, in thinking to unite myself with Vaughn, when I could not give him my heart as well as my hand; and to have done so would have entailed unknown misery upon us both, for he, my friend, I am persuaded does not love me. Be sure, dear, 'tis but a matter of pride with him. He will

soon be free, Katie, and then you will have no bar to your affections."

The deep crimson that came and went upon the countenance of the young girl betrayed the intensity of the emotion which agitated her. At last she could no longer control herself, but, bursting into tears, threw herself upon her friend's bosom, and confessed the truth. An eloquent silence reigned between them for some moments, when the elder, kissing her friend, bade her cheer up, for all would be well.

The day following, Grace freely confessed all to Vaughn. At first he seemed under the control of his old spirit, and was disposed to hold her to their engagement; but his heart softened as he learned how dear he was to another—one so fair and beautiful; Grace arose from the interview once more free.

'Tis a true proverb that "love begets love." Not many hours were suffered to elapse ere the sick man, inspired by Katie's presence and kind ministrations, made a full and free confession of his love for her, and besought her to become his wife. Kate, with all a woman's dignity and tact, would not appear to allow her consent to be too easily won; she wished first to test the sincerity of his affection. It was many days, and only after repeated protestations on his part, followed by a confession of the true nature of the feelings he had entertained toward her friend, which was the result of vanity and pique, that she finally consented to become his wife. Then followed to both a season propitious of happiness, in which it became very apparent how fully Vaughn had given himself up to a better life. His strength rapidly returned, and, ere another month, they were enabled to embark for home. When Mr. Somerset was informed of the turn affairs had taken, he was at first disposed to show some displeasure, but it was no hard matter to bring him to terms, for, however much he might condemn the choice Grace had made, he was secretly overjoyed at the prospect of his daughter possessing a husband whom his heart entirely approved. Their marriage was not long delayed; and as the nature of his wound would render him unfit for further service, Vaughn retired to the comforts which a quiet home, a true and loving wife, and a handsome income ever should insure.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT CAME OF A TRIP TO TOWN.

THERE was one heart less happy than those around. Grace lingered in Paris up to the last hour of Vaughn's and Katie's stay, but never to meet with him for whom all others were as naught. The days swept by sadly ; weeks came and went, and with them the dear, sweet hopes which had sprung up in her heart, after the visit of Captain Jones to the Somerset mansion. When she flew to Paris along with Kate, it was not without the fond anticipation of again seeing Fletcher, and receiving from his lips the tokens of her restoration to favor. But she waited in vain. He neither walked the streets of the French capital, nor sped one word with which to guide the maiden's heart through the dull darkness gathering around her inner life. After providing carefully for his wounded enemy at the call of duty, he hastened to the coast, and soon was absorbed in the varied fortunes of his friend and commander. Had he known that Grace was in Paris, he might have flown to her side ; but, supposing her still to be in her English home, he gave over all thoughts of meeting with her again until the deadly contest was over, and he was released from his honorable service. This hope of reunion was sedulously, though very delicately, encouraged by Captain Jones, who, even in his remarkably active life, neglected no occasion to serve his officer.

Time passed and brought no word to the lover. The doubts, the fears, the pains of separation, all served to impress his mind gloomily. No word reached him from Grace ; was she then united to Vaughn ? Was she weak enough to fail in her faith, and to give way before the wishes of her guardian ? It was a painful struggle for Fletcher—a season of dreadful suspense ; but he dared not believe the worst. He had been told that she loved him still, and he would believe her true, even though she was absent and not communicating with him. With a devotion truly noble, he awaited the future unwaver-

ingly, preferring to think that there would come to him a reward commensurate with his trust.

Grace returned with Vaughn and Kate to the Somerset place, and there tarried through the weary years of the war. How she scanned the sea daily in hopes that, despite of danger, the audacious "rebel" Captain would dash into the offing and visit her once more! In every odd-looking visitor she hoped to recognize the reckless but faithful Yankee, who could bring her word from her lover. But no word, no messenger came through those seasons of waiting and hope unanswered; and when, at length, it was announced that the war was ended, her heart so reached out toward the distant land that once had been her home, that no prayer of the loving Kate, no entreaty of Vaughn, no advice of Mr. Somerset, availed to prevent her preparations for an immediate return to American shores. She obtained, as a companion and maid, the pilot's wife, Rose. The hardy fisherman had followed his perilous trade to find in the ocean his last bed, leaving poor Rose with one child, in circumstances of a somewhat depressing nature; but Grace, with her bounty, stood before the widow's door to keep want away; and when it was proposed for Rose and her child to accompany the young lady, an eager assent gladdened her heart.

We need not detail that return to the old home—to the spot endeared to her by so many both pleasurable and painful circumstances. The war had wrecked all its former beauty; its orchards were ruined, its lawns and fields were desolate; but the homestead stood, and to it Grace at once returned upon her landing on American soil. To bring back the old beauty, to restore the fields to their ancient fertility, to add to the attractions of the estate upon which Grace had determined to spend her years, were the special labors which busily employed much of her time. The cares were many, but, with great energy, she met them all; while in Rose she found an assistant equal to almost every emergency. Located not far from the sound of Long Island, with a fine look-out upon the waters, the two women found much companionship in the sea, upon whose shores they spent many pleasant hours. It is needless to write that, out over the waves there went hopes, wishes, prayers, all winged with woman's tenderness—that by

day and night, as the waters laid orisons upon the shores, Grace answered with her own sighs for the precious treasures of her own which the deep refused to return.

The summer of 1784 came to bless the land with its fruitfulness. Everywhere throughout the States a sudden thrift had followed the cessation of hostilities in the preceding year, that foreshadowed the energy and success which were to become typical of the American people. Soldiers returned to shops and fields with the alacrity of men ambitious to improve their fortunes, and proud of their position as American citizens. Villages put on a fresh prosperity; fields smiled, as if in remembrance of their virgin days of prolific crops; forests rung with the rich music of the ax; the sharp cry of the teamster echoed over the hills, as he bore along up the highways his load of human freight, seeking the settlements to the north and west. It was the awakening of a mighty nation to its first consciousness—Endymion's sleep was ended.

Grace felt all the spirit and pride of an American woman in these evidences of prosperity; and, had it not been for the one low, sad refrain echoing evermore in her soul, like the sobbing of the sea, she would have been fully and richly happy. But that pain of a woman's heart—the pain of unanswered love—was with her ceaselessly, and she suffered as only a woman suffers who nourishes a hope which daily strengthens only to become more distant of realization.

One day, as the summer season was bringing the harvest-time, and the demand for laborers became great, Rose started out to obtain assistance at the nearest village—then a little settlement on a lovely bay of the sound, where coasters and fishing-smacks resorted for repairs and supplies. Proceeding but a short distance toward the village, she encountered a man, seemingly a sailor, resting under the shade, as if overcome with the exceeding heat of the hour. Rose, strong in her goodness and devotion, could pass no sailor in distress without offering assistance, and at once approached and addressed him:

“My friend, are you ill?”

“Wal, I guess I am, though I can't say for sartin. I got kind o' dizzy, as if a looking-glass had slid before my eyes and turned things upside down; so I kinder thought I would cast anchor here for the squall to pass.”

"Do you live near?"

"No, sir—no, ma'am, I mean; I used to live way down in Maine, but latterly I haven't *lived* anywhere; I have been scootin' around generally."

"You are a sailor, I infer; can I do any thing for you?"

"Wal, I guess you might jest give us a lift, and perhaps I could navigate; but confound me if I hadn't rather run out of Carrickfergus in a storm than to try to steer north in this blastin', blazin' sun-calm."

"What do you know about Carrickfergus?" asked Rose, in some excitement.

"Not much; only I once went out of that port when I jest made up my mind that I wasn't goin' into any other but the eternal haven where Davy Jones keeps the half-way house; but, then, I stole a march on old Davy by stealing a pilot, and so we come out safe, but it was a mighty clean shave, I tell you!"

Rose pressed her hand to her hot temples; her heart thumped audibly in its emotions of commingled hope and fear. She longed, yet scarcely dared, to ask if that pilot was her own husband; she thought of all the past in which the man before her had acted a part; she was burdened with the thought that he held in his keeping what must make or unmake the happiness of her own dear mistress. Her perturbation was not unnoticed by the sailor.

"I rather guess *you* are sick, ma'am—you look so. Jest let me blow you a little breeze with my tarpaulin," said the traveler, as he essayed to rise from his sitting posture.

But Rose quickly recovered her composure, and added:

"*You are Hezekiah Hand!*"

"Jewrusalem! Who be you?"

"I am the pilot's widow."

The sailor bounded to his feet as if an order to "fire!" had been given by Paul Jones. He caught the woman's hands in his own, while he said, with great gentleness:

"Is he dead?"

"Dead long ago; drowned on the reefs; and I am here along with Miss Maitland."

Hezekiah—for it indeed was our old friend—looked at her incredulously for a moment; then he slowly puckered his lips,

and gave utterance to a long-continued whistle, as expressive of surprise and incredulity. When he had finished, he put his hand in his jacket-pocket, produced a huge plug of "Virginia twist" tobacco, bit off its great end, and then exclaimed:

"You don't say so!"

Rose smiled at this odd reception of her revelation.

"Then why in thunder didn't you say so at first?" cried Hezekiah, as he pulled his tarpaulin down over his eyes, and rammed his hands in his jacket-pockets, while he tried to look furiously at the half-mystified woman.

"Why, I told you, sir, as soon as I could," said Rose, somewhat abashed.

"Did you? Then give us your hand, for, by golly, I feel well, and would just like to fight, and if anybody comes this way, danged if I don't."

With this he pulled off his jacket, flinging it on the ground with great energy; the great quid of tobacco he threw from his mouth, as if in a rage; then he "hitched" up his pants, circled around Rose in odd efforts at being polite; and finally ended by coming to a stand, exclaiming:

"Oh, I shall bust!"

It was now evident that Hezekiah's mind was perturbed; and Rose, in her turn, proposed to act the sympathetic part.

"Will you not take my arm, and let me assist you to the homestead? Miss Grace will be very glad to see you."

"Take your arm! Oh, Jewrusalem, don't hurt a feller—*don't!* I'll swow—that is, I don't swow—that is, what's the time o' day?"

He looked the picture of despair. Rose, with true tact, relieved his embarrassment at once by smilingly picking up the jacket and offering him her arm. Hezekiah seized the proffered honor as if it were a mast to which he was clinging in a storm; and, under her guidance, he literally sailed away up the road toward the cottage, casting at his companion glances that were as full of the summer of content as the fields were full of sunshine.

Rose at length broke the rather embarrassing silence by an inquiry:

"Don't you want to see Miss Grace?"

"Wal, I guess not."

"Why?"

"Wal, blame me if I ain't mad at her."

"You surprise me. Why are you mad at her?"

"*Why!* Thunder and ramrods, didn't she treat the Captain mean?"

"Who do you call the Captain?"

"Who? Why, Mr. Fletcher, *of course*. He's a Captain now, by special act of Congress."

This was uttered with an air of evident pride.

"Miss Grace certainly has been very true to Mr. Fletcher; she loves him with undying devotion, and only lives in hopes that some day he will return to her."

"*You don't say so!*" he cried, as he suddenly released the arm of Rose, and stayed his steps. "Then why in thunder didn't you say so at first?" he fairly shouted.

"I told you as soon as I could," plead Rose.

"Did you? Wal, that's queer, I declare. I'm blest if I ain't out of reckoning, that's all. Jest you hold your course while I beat up for an observation."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, dang it, you run before the wind into quarters, while I jest lay off and on here for a while, to kind o' learn how to box my compass."

"I do not understand."

"Oh, what a fool I am, to be jabbering sailor talk to you. Why, you see, I've been so long on salt junk that I can't help it. Howsomever, I mean you jest go in the house, and leave me here a while to think about matters, and get my wits together. 'She loves him with undying devotion, and only lives in hopes that some day he will return to her.' Now, go in the house, that's a good gal."

Rose could not resist this request. Handing Hezekiah his jacket, she turned her steps up the path to the house.

Left to himself, the Yankee sat down quietly beneath the thick shade of a thorn. Filling his mouth with a large piece of tobacco, he gave himself up to its mastication and to thought. What was the tenor of his thoughts may be inferred from results. Rising, at length, he cautiously scanned the vicinity, as if fearing observation; then struck out at a fast pace down the road leading to the village.

Rose waited, with feverish anxiety, until the day was fast closing, yet her wayfarer did not appear. She then determined to seek him, and again passed out upon the road. He was not there, but in the dust of the track she plainly detected the prints of his feet turned from the house. The maid gave vent to a hearty burst of tears—tears of disappointment and of fear that all was lost. She retraced her steps hurriedly, to find Grace on the piazza as if awaiting her coming. It was useless for Rose to try and hide her now fully excited feelings; and she at once made to her mistress a full confession of all that had transpired.

It would be impossible to paint the grief and pain which overwhelmed poor Grace that evening. She became the prey of fears too wild for reason, but what does woman know of reason when her soul is stirred to its depths by the storm of feeling. That there was something wrong was only too apparent; but it passed all her power of comprehension to guess wherein she had sinned or done his affection wrong after the promise given to Captain Jones. Truly, she was miserable.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT ANCHOR FOR LIFE.

THE pressing need of harvest hands again sent Rose out, early the next morning, in quest of help. She had not gone far before she met a farmer's help—a somewhat rough-looking but evidently intelligent fellow, whom she at once addressed:

"I am in quest of hands for the harvest. Are you looking for work?"

"I would job it a few days, provided all was made right—good pay and good fodder."

"My mistress will pay what is right, and I myself will prepare the food."

"Who is your mistress?"

"Miss Grace Maitland."

"She is, I hear, a hard task-master."

"That is false, whoever says it," was the spirited reply.

"Well, I hope so. I will try her one day, at least;" and

so saying, the two trudged back to the farm. The man strolled out on the grounds around the house while Rose prepared his breakfast.

To give her assistant all necessary help, Grace appeared in the kitchen in the midst of preparations. Rose informed her of her success, and rather timidly repeated what the man had said in regard to her being a hard task-master. The implication stung her pride, and at once she resolved to ask an explanation. Discovering the man lying prone upon the grass, out among the shrubbery of the lawn, she directed her steps toward him. He did not see her approach.

"You say I am a hard task-master. What reason have you for saying so?"

The man sprung to his feet, as if alarmed at her words. The surprise was complete. Grace stood there, pale, calm, self-possessed; traces of her night's sorrow were stamped upon her beautiful face; yet she was the woman of twenty-three, prepared to assert her rights and to preserve her good name against all comers. Her eyes flashed brightly, but only for a moment. The form, the face before her were so vividly like those of him whose image had been to her the one sweet hope of life, that the association startled and confused her.

"I *did* say so, ma'am," said the man, as he drew his large hot-weather hat down upon his head. "I heard so from a man who knew you once."

"Fletcher—*Fletcher*! Surely it is you!"

Grace rushed to the stranger's side, seized the rough straw hat from his head, and the next moment was in his arms, unconscious. She had fainted from excess of her emotion.

"Grace—Grace! Look up—it is I, returned at last!"

But Grace lay heavily on his breast, and he bore her to the house in haste. Rose, ready with her breakfast, had just come to the door to call her "help," when he came forward, bearing her mistress in his arms. The alarmed maid gave one wild cry, and would have taken Grace from the keeping of the "hired man," but his demeanor warned her away. "Water—salts—quick!" were his words of command. Laying his burden down upon the cool grass in front of the porch, the application of restoratives soon brought back the color to the cheek. Opening her eyes, Grace at once recognized her

lover, who was now, indeed, his old self, in the tenderness of his ways and the love-light in his eyes. The smile of deep content which passed over her mistress' face assured Rose that the night of sorrow had brought forth a glorious resurrection. With admirable apprehension of the "proprieties" of the moment, Rose withdrew, leaving Fletcher and Grace to themselves. They soon were at home in the old parlor, where we leave them to tell the story of their loves, fears, disappointments and sacrifices.

That breakfast stood upon the table one long hour untasted. Rose sat down in the doorway, lost to her own thoughts, waiting she knew not for what. The ripe grain stood rustling in the field, inviting the keen "cradle" of the harvester, yet no harvester came. It seemed as if a Sabbath of repose had suddenly fallen over all. The silence at length was broken.

"Say, you, do you want somebody to make way with these fixins?"

Rose turned, to find Hezekiah in the room. He had noiselessly entered by the back door, and now announced his coming, evidently having reassured himself by a careful reconnoiter that all was right.

Rose sprung to her feet, while a deep flush suffused her always deeply-colored Scotch face. The picture of womanly truth and vigor, she yet blushed and betrayed the timidity of the girl before the honest glance of the tall and robust figure of the Yankee.

"Yes, I do want some one to clear the table, since everything is spoiled," she at length answered. "But you don't deserve any favors, for you didn't keep your promise last night. I have a good mind to turn you out of doors."

"Now don't. I am jest goin' to stay here to do up things arter the old sort. I'm goin' to walk through that field of wheat like a shot through a magazine. I'm goin' to put things to rights generally. I'm goin' to tear 'round, jest to knock the salt out of me, and try to be a land-lubber once more."

All of which pleased Rose, if we could judge by the smile on her rosy face. She stood blushing and irresolute, however, unable to utter a word at the Yankee's glowing promises.

This demeanor abashed Hezekiah; his newly-found enthusiasm suddenly died on his lips, and his head hung down like that of a boy tardy at school. It was a moment of commingled pleasure and pain, which might have lasted all day long, had not a friendly circumstance come to their relief. Grace and Fletcher, locked arm in arm, stood before the embarrassed couple. It was a surprise as well for them as for Hezekiah and Rose.

"What, Rose, is this *your* morning of deliverance as well as mine?" asked Grace, whose face fairly radiated with happiness.

"What, Hezekiah, have you boarded ship and handled cutlass only to be conquered, in the end, by a lassie?" chimed in Fletcher.

"Oh, Lord!" cried Rose, in some dismay, at the possible hint conveyed by Grace's query.

"Oh, hokey!" cried Hezekiah, in response, while his face beamed like a newly arisen sun with surprise and delight at the implication of Fletcher.

"I didn't mean any thing," whimpered Rose.

"I did, by thunder!" put in Hezekiah. "I jest think you are the only woman in creation fit to pilot Hezekiah Hand into port, jest as your own husband, whose eyes I filled with sand, took me and the Captain there out o' Carrickfergus. And, by Jewrusalem, if you'll be as true to me as I'll be true to you, we'll tackle and go halves in right down earnest."

Rose broke from the room in haste, flying to the privacy of her own chamber; whether in pain, anger, or in sweet dismay none present could tell.

"Now you've done it, Hand," said Fletcher. "Your usual inconsiderate way of doing things has lost you, I much fear, the further opportunity of talking love to Rose."

"May I be scuttled and sunk!" groaned Hezekiah, while his face seemed so woe-begone and comfortless that both Grace and Fletcher burst into a loud laugh, in the midst of which the Yankee coolly sat down to the table, and in silence began to appease his hearty hunger. His love-suit had not injured his appetite. The only too happy Grace and Fletcher withdrew, leaving Hezekiah alone, as he evidently wished to be.

"Done for!" he muttered, as a huge piece of meat disap-

peared from his plate. "Split and quartered!" "Dang it!" "Blasted fool!" "Goin' right back to sea!" was interjected, as his repast progressed. "Yes, *sir*, I'm off!" and with this he sprung, with some violence, from his seat, darted to the back door and disappeared, as Rose softly reëntered. Her face was not that of a woman bowed down with sadness. On the contrary, she looked remarkably rosy, as if the excitement of the hour had touched her heart.

"Gone! and I heard him say 'Going right back to sea!'" she exclaimed, while tears stood in her eyes. "What can I do? The harvest is ripe—every thing goes wrong—we want a man about the house. Oh, dear!" and she, too, moved hastily to the door, to behold Hezekiah making off in the distance. Away she flew in pursuit. Once beyond the reach of hearing in the house, she began to call: "Hezekiah! Hezekiah! Mr. Hand!" but the thoroughly disgusted lover pushed on, deaf to all cries. Rose increased her speed and gained on her flying friend. He mounted the fence, finally, which bounded the highway. Once over it and he was lost. Rose, now thoroughly alarmed at the impending danger, sprung upon a large stone and shouted his name. It was like the bugle-note sounding a parley. Hezekiah was caught by it on the top rail, and there it fixed him like a statue. He balanced himself in speechless wonder and awaited, in astonishment, the approach of his pursuer. Rose soon came up within speaking distance.

"Don't go, dear Hezekiah," floated softly over the air. It served to knock the poor fellow off the fence however. He gained his feet in a moment, and stood as if debating as to the proper course to pursue.

"Dear Hezekiah!" again assailed his ears. It entered his heart. Opening wide his arms, he staggered against the fence for support. Soon Rose was clasped to his bosom. The truce was a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive. After a half-hour of mutual condolence and reciprocal compliment, the twain returned to the house arm in arm, "the happiest couple of sea-dogs that ever barked," as Hezekiah answered to the astonished Grace and Fletcher, who received the announcement with undisguised satisfaction.

We have little to add to our story. Grace and Fletcher were not wedded for three months after the event narrated above, owing to a desire that Captain Jones should honor the nuptials with his presence. The time of probation was passed in recitals of the oft-told tale of Fletcher's disappointment in not hearing from Grace, and of Grace's daily prayers for his safe return to her. But Hezekiah and Rose could not await the action of the Continental Congress on Captain Jones' affairs; and so one September morning, a magistrate stepped in to make them one, which was done in real old-fashioned Connecticut style. Rose became a willing wife for a second time, and gave her now rosy little daughter to Hezekiah, as her only dowry—a dower which he received with real satisfaction. The honest fellow truly loved "his Rosy," as he called her; while she, in turn, found in his good nature, his kind heart, his willing hand and loyalty to Fletcher, every thing to admire. A pretty cottage, planted near the road, close to the spot where Rose first called "Dear Hezekiah," came into existence with marvelous rapidity; and when, at length, the old mansion witnessed the marriage of Grace and Fletcher, Mr. and Mrs. Hand were permitted to enter upon the joys of wedded life in their own dwelling.

Fletcher's wedding was honored with the presence of Captain Jones. That strange but truly noble man gave Grace away with all a father's feeling, and none, more than he, enjoyed the occasion. It, evidently, was to him the culmination of a happy dream.

If, during his succeeding absence in a foreign land, he received a sweetly-perfumed letter signed "Grace Fletcher," which told him of the birth of her first-born—a son—and was made supremely happy over its contents, it was because the happy father and mother had asked his consent to christen their child PAUL JONES FLETCHER.

Hezekiah then resolved that *his* first-born, whether it was male or female, should be called Hezekiah Rose John Paul Jones Fletcher Ranger Hand.

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